

Managing Scottish Group Awards: information for senior managers in colleges

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About this guide

This guide for senior managers in further education colleges summarises information on Scottish Group Awards (SGAs) and their role in the range of SQA qualifications. It overviews management tasks related to the delivery of SGAs, working from strategic to operational perspectives. The guide complements the packs that have been produced for the use of curriculum leaders and lecturers in centres that will offer SGAs. These packs provide detailed, subject-specific information.

The document pulls together up-to-date information from a variety of sources on policies and procedures for implementing SGAs. Some general, but relatively newly available, information on matters such as assessment and procedures is also included.

Throughout the document margin notes refer to key publications and these are also listed in Appendix 1.

Part A:

Section 1 provides an overview of the rationale and purpose of SGAs, the structure of SGAs and the types of SGAs — general and named awards.

Section 2 reviews a series of stages for establishing SGAs: determining the market, objectives, the place of SGAs in the college curriculum map, and promoting SGAs.

Part B:

Sections 3-9 review the potential of cross-college planning and tasks to be managed in the following areas:

- ◆ Programme design
- ◆ Programme delivery
- ◆ Core Skills
- ◆ Guidance
- ◆ Assessment
- ◆ Resource management

Section 10 highlights SGA-related aspects of operational procedures: approval, authorisation, validation, entering candidates, and certificates.

Abbreviations used

AH	Advanced Higher
COSHEP	Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals
CSYS	Certificate of Sixth Year Studies
FE	Further Education
GSVQ	General Scottish Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
HSDU	Higher Still Development Unit
LEC	Local Enterprise Company
MIS	Management Information System
NAB	National Assessment Bank
NC	National Certificate
NRA	National Record of Achievement
SCCC	Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum
SCE	Scottish Certificate of Education
SCN	Scottish Candidate Number
SFEFC	Scottish Further Education Funding Council
SCOTVEC	Scottish Vocational Education Council
SEB	Scottish Examination Board
SGA	Scottish Group Award
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SQC	Scottish Qualifications Certificate
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
SWAP	Scottish Wider Access Programme

Part A: Introducing SGAs and adopting a strategic approach

1: Key Features of Scottish Group Awards

This section provides an overview of the rationale and purpose of SGAs, the structure of SGAs and the types of SGA — general and named awards.

Rationale and purpose of SGAs

Scottish Group Awards are the most prestigious of the new National Qualifications. They re-introduce formally-certificated group awards into this part of the qualifications framework so that group awards are available in all three qualification families. They are a combination of National Courses, National Units and Core Skills designed to meet a coherent overall purpose. Each SGA will equip the candidate with a range of skills and knowledge which will form the basis for lifelong learning and development. Achieving a Scottish Group Award indicates that the holder can:

- ◆ undertake a coherent programme of study
- ◆ achieve the knowledge and skills necessary for particular progression routes
- ◆ reach a certain level of educational attainment
- ◆ achieve a certain level of Core Skills competence

For secondary schools, Scottish Group Awards are a way in which the curriculum entitlement can be delivered for students of all abilities. As well as replacing GSVQs, they are available in a much wider range of vocational areas and as general awards.

For colleges and other providers, Scottish Group Awards can extend and simplify the range of GSVQs previously offered, and give added value to National Certificate programmes through the Core Skills requirement and the external assessment.

For universities, the general and named SGAs permit the inclusion of subjects often sought for entrance to degree Courses. The introduction of the Advanced Higher Scottish Group Award brings Scotland more closely into line with European countries that have similar awards at the end of secondary education, such as the Abitur in Germany and the Baccalaureate in France.

For employers, SGAs provide a number of measures of a candidate's achievement. The formal assessment, the certification of Core Skills at benchmarked levels, and the breadth and balance of study involved, will all interest employers. Named SGAs have been designed with the relevant SVQs in mind, and the awards cover knowledge that underpins the competences required for the SVQ.

The rationale for each SGA is given in the relevant SGA Support Packs. These rationales explain in detail the coherence of the programme that can be developed for

the group award, and the place of the group award in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

SGAs are designed to lead to other group awards, including SGAs at the same or a higher level, Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas, and Scottish Vocational Qualifications. Whilst they cannot be tailored directly to the whole range of degree Courses, they do package candidate achievement under a title which indicates substantial achievement in a general or more specialised programme.

Levels

Scottish Group Awards are available at six levels, from Access 2 to Advanced Higher. The types of SGA available at each level at present are:

Access 2	One general	
Access 3	One general	
Intermediate 1	One general	
Intermediate 2	One general	15 named awards
Higher	One general	44 named awards
Advanced Higher	One general	

Structure of SGAs

To get an SGA, candidates must achieve a prescribed number of Courses. For example, at Higher they must get three Courses and at Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 they must get two Courses. They must also complete a Core Skills profile with all five Core Skills: Communication, Numeracy, Information Technology, Problem Solving and Working with Others at a level specified for each award.

The composition and level of demand of SGAs are summarised in Figure 1 and illustrated in Figure 2.

These figures show the minimum requirement for the SGAs. Many candidates may be able to exceed these requirements, for example by achieving a Course at Higher rather than at Intermediate 2, or a Core Skill higher than the minimum specified. These extra achievements are highlighted on the candidate's Scottish Qualifications Certificate (see Section 4).

There is considerable scope for candidates to be given credit for prior achievements, so an individual may not have to take the programme of study covering all an SGA's components. For example, a candidate who already has a relevant SCE Higher (from 1994 onwards) can use this to contribute four of the credits needed for an SGA. Case by case details on the possible substitutions for Standard Grades and SVQs is given in the specification for each SGA. (See also Section 5: Programme delivery).

Figure 1: Composition and level of demand of Scottish Group Awards -minimum requirements

Total Credits	Courses	Unit Credits	Core Skills*
Advanced Higher 20 credits	3 Advanced Higher Courses (12 credits)	8 at Higher	3 at Higher and 2 at Intermediate 2
Higher 20 credits	3 Higher Courses (12 credits)	8 at Intermediate 2	All at Intermediate 2
Intermediate 2 16 credits	2 Intermediate 2 Courses (8 credits)	8 at Intermediate 1	All at Intermediate 1
Intermediate 1 16 credits	2 Intermediate 1 Courses (8 credits)	8 at Access 3	All at Access 3
Access 3 Single: 12 credits Double: 18 credits Triple: 24 credits		 6 at Access 3 6 at Access 2 12 at Access 3 6 at Access 2 18 at Access 3 6 at Access 2	All at Access 2
Access 2 Single: 9 credits Double: 14 credits Triple: 18 credits		 9 at Access 2 14 at Access 2 18 at Access 2	All at Access 2

*This is a requirement of general SGAs. Named SGAs may need specific Core Skills to be achieved at higher levels. Please refer to the appropriate SGA specification for details.

Figure 2: Illustration of the composition of SGAs at each level

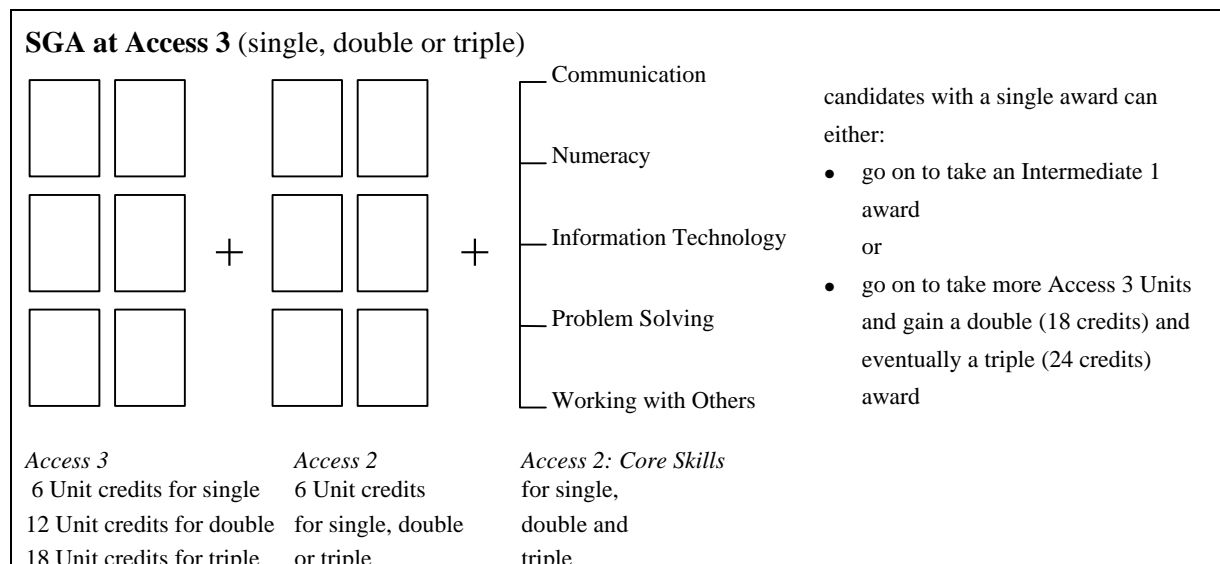
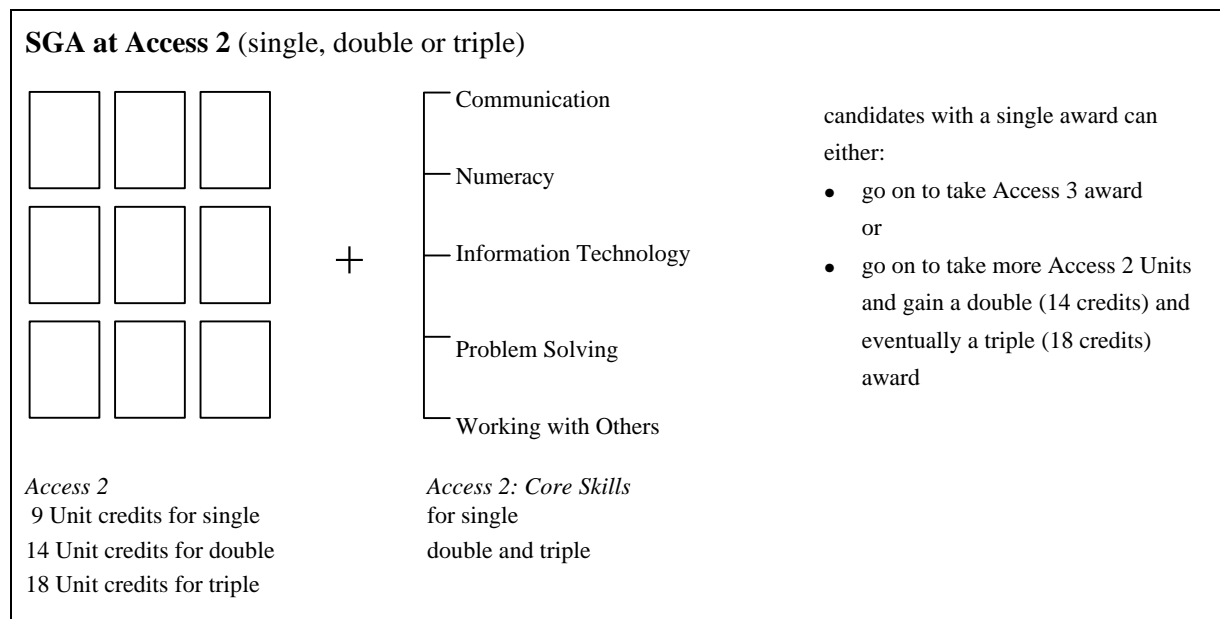


Figure 2 (continued)

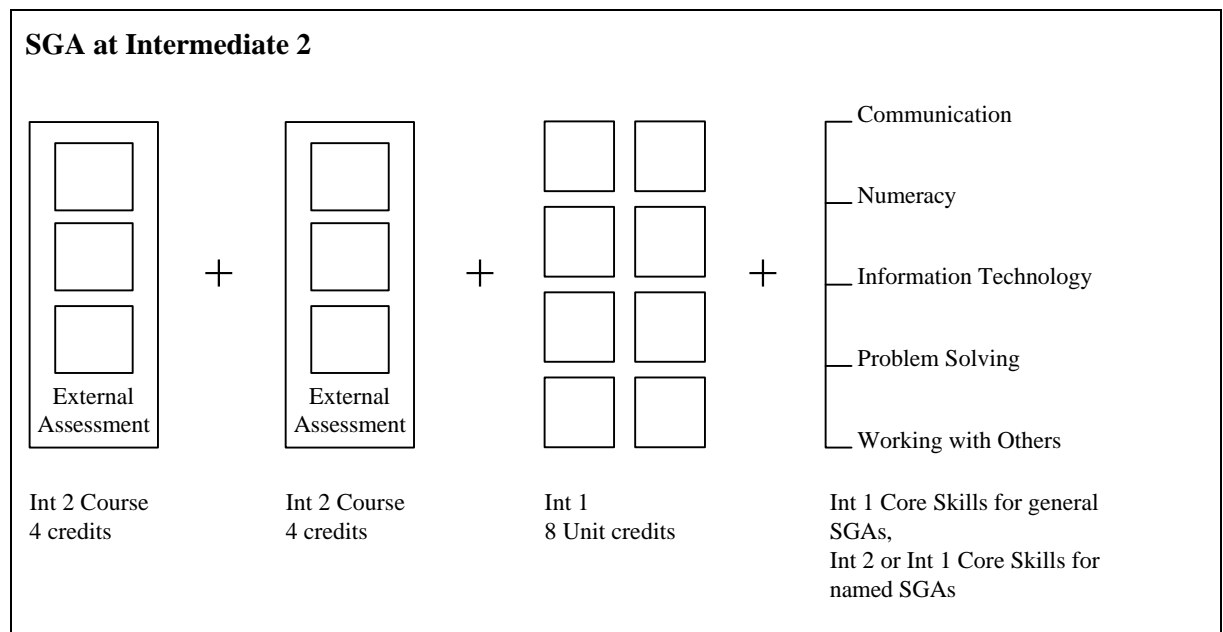
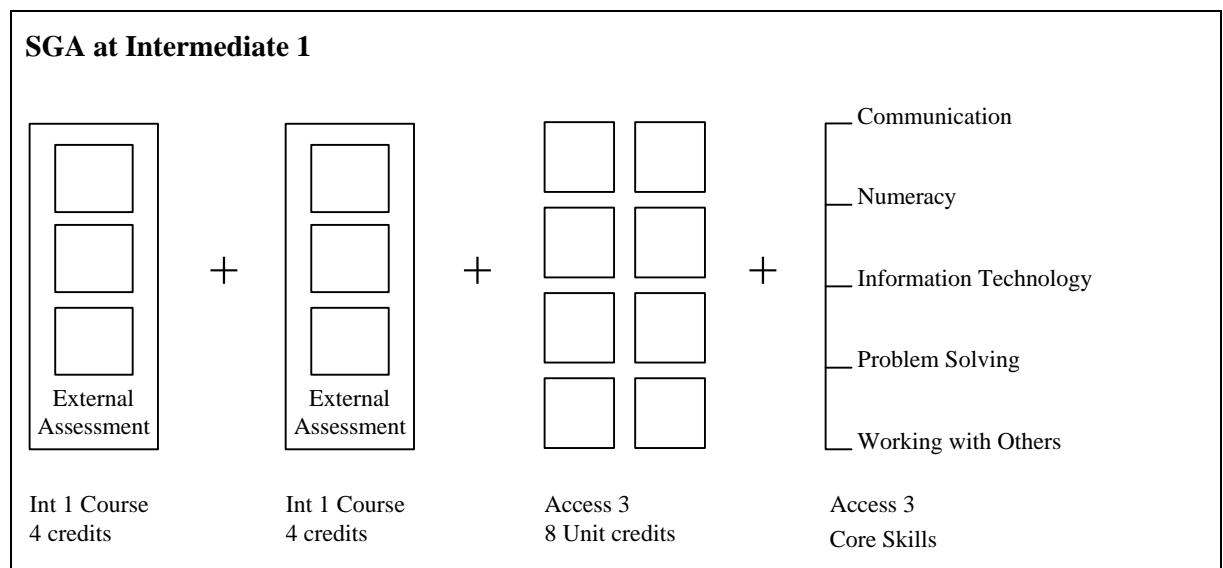
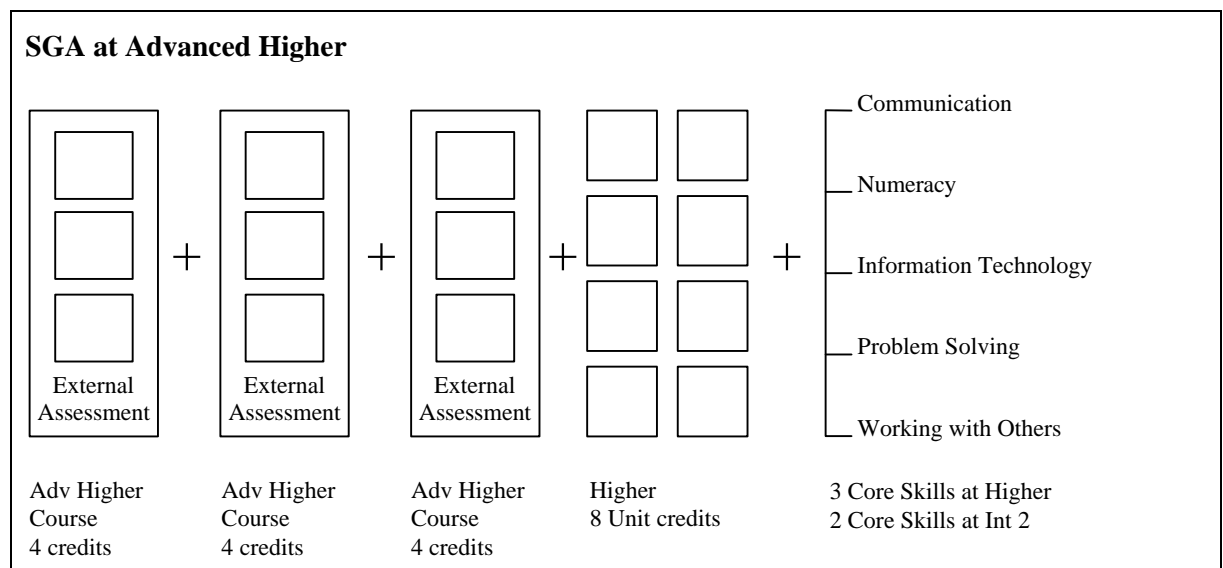
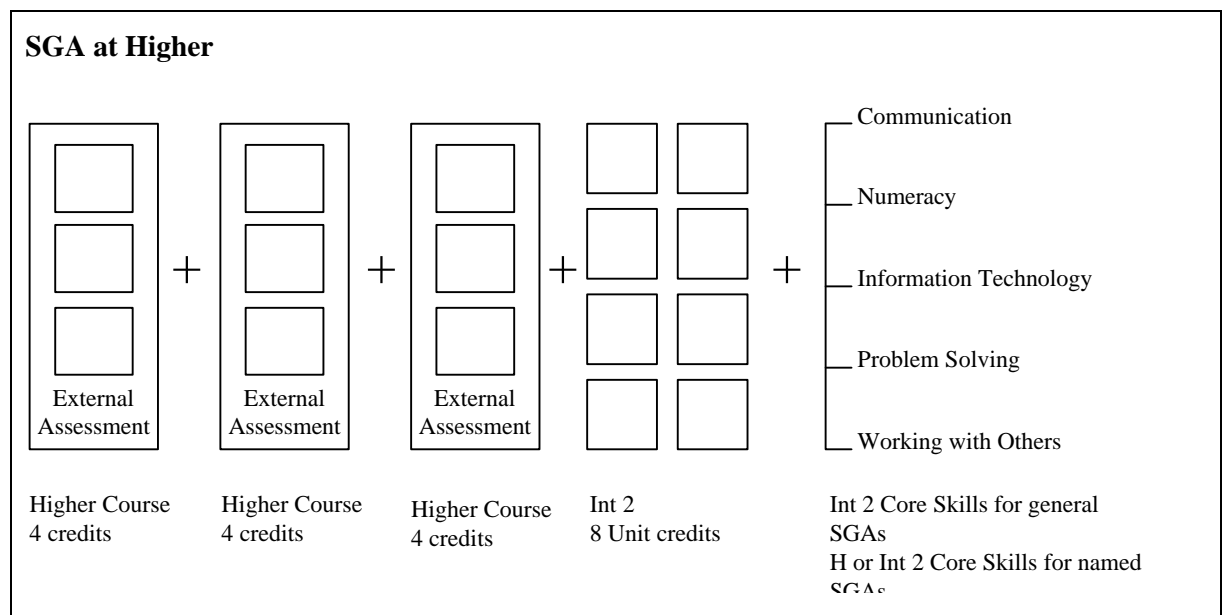


Figure 2 (continued)



Types of SGA – general SGAs and named SGAs

There are two types of SGA: general SGAs and named SGAs. Both types of group award have to meet requirements about the number of Courses and Units and the type and level of Core Skills needed for the qualification.

Detailed SGA specifications can be accessed from the Internet at www.sqa.org.uk/higher-still. Paper copies have been made available to all centres.

General SGAs

General SGAs are designed to meet the needs of those candidates at all levels who are interested in general education and who wish to keep progression routes open. They cater for candidates who wish to qualify for an SGA because of the rationale of the group award, but do not want to commit to a specialised named award at that time. The group awards are designed to allow centres more flexibility to create programmes not covered by the named SGAs so the specification is defined in general terms.

A general award has no mandatory requirements for subjects to be studied but has set requirements in terms of the number of Courses and/or Units to be completed at the level of the award or the level below. All Core Skills are also needed at a minimum of the level below the level of the award.

At **Access 2 and 3** the general SGA is made up of a coherent programme of National Units and National Clusters. At these levels there are ‘single’, ‘double’ and ‘triple’ awards to give more opportunities for lateral progression, which is appropriate for some candidates. There is no external assessment at Access 2 and Access 3.

At **Intermediate 1** the general SGA is made up of a coherent programme of National Courses, Clusters and Units. There is external assessment at this level as well as at the three higher levels.

At **Intermediate 2, Higher, and Advanced Higher** the make-up of the general awards can be chosen by the candidate so long as the proposed programme meets the design rules for the level of the award and shows coherence related to progression. At these levels the proposed routes have to be submitted to SQA for authorisation (see Section 10 for details).

Figure 3 summarises the composition of general SGAs.

Figure 3: Composition of general SGAs

There is one general SGA at each level: Access 2, Access 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher

Example: a general SGA at Intermediate 2

Any coherent programme (as authorised by SQA) for Intermediate 2 that is designed to include the following:

National Courses: 2 at Intermediate 2 (8 credits) Plus	choice from over 70 National Courses
8 Units at a minimum of Intermediate 1 (8 credits)	choice from National Qualifications Catalogue
Core Skills	5 Core Skills at a minimum of Intermediate 1

Named SGAs

Named SGAs have specific requirements for the number and type of mandatory and optional Courses and Units and the Core Skills to be included in the award. The group award specifications have been designed by steering groups of specialists in each award area. This ensures that achievement of the group awards gives the soundest possible basis for candidates who want to progress into either further stages of education or into employment.

Named awards are grouped together into 16 broad areas or ‘SGA families’, each with at least one SGA at each level (currently 15 SGAs at Intermediate 2 and 44 at Higher). The families are:

Art and Design	Arts
Business	Care
Communication and Media	Computing and Information Technology
Construction	Engineering
Hairdressing and Beauty Services	Hospitality
Land and Environment	Performing Arts
Science	Sport and Leisure
Technology	Travel and Tourism

Figure 4: Example of the composition of named SGAs –named SGA at Intermediate 2

National Courses: 2 at Intermediate 2 (8 credits)	could be: both mandatory or both from specified list of National Courses or one mandatory and one other from specified list
Plus 8 Units at a minimum of Intermediate 1 (8 credits)	could be: choice from specified list or open choice of National Units
Plus Core Skills 5 Core Skills	could be: 5 at Intermediate 1 or as specified for each Core Skill, one could be at Int 2, the remainder at Int 1

The **specification** provides information on the Courses and Units which candidates must complete, and the Core Skills profile they need; it also lists other Courses and/or Units from which candidates can select the remainder of their programme (subject to availability in the centre). It also gives information on credit issues such as hierarchies, substitutions and double counting and guidance on programme choice.(See Section 5 Programme delivery.)

Appendix 2 of this guide contains a summary list of all the named SGAs, and a summary of the make-up of the SGAs in each family.

2: Establishing the SGA strategy

This section reviews a series of stages for establishing SGAs: determining the market, the objectives, the place of SGAs in the college curriculum map, and SGA promotion.

Determining the market

What market analysis is needed?

College studies on internal factors that are underway to inform plans for introducing SGAs include:

See, for example, *Implementation Studies for Colleges: Scottish Group Awards*.

- ◆ **audits** of existing provision taking account of total enrolments by department section, by target group, and by candidate profile
- ◆ forecasts of **future enrolments**
- ◆ forecasts of the **impact** of SGAs on existing progressions — to HNC/Ds, degrees, FE college programmes, and SVQs — and the potential for development of new or expanded progression routes
- ◆ working out possible **opportunities and threats**, and **strengths and weaknesses**
- ◆ **evaluations** of experiences of other group awards: HNC/Ds and SVQs and, in particular, GSVQs, SWAP programmes, and other programmes where local agreements exist
- ◆ spelling out **interface discrepancies**, especially between SGAs and Higher National and SVQ provision

College studies on external factors are also underway, for example:

- ◆ **research on employment** in the local area to help decisions about which named SGAs might support work experience and employment opportunities
- ◆ analysis of the **local curriculum cover** to decide which SGAs at which levels should be offered
- ◆ **finding out the views of other interest groups**, especially education authorities, schools, established employer and university links, careers services and LECs

Where there are gaps in provision, is it feasible for the college to develop new provision (staffing, accommodation, resources). Where there is over-provision, would some sharing or collaboration over provision of group awards or of different levels of awards or parts of awards be feasible?

Which groups of candidates will SGAs be aimed at?

Among the current and potential new client groups who will be interested in SGAs are:

- ◆ school candidates taking linked school-college Courses, especially GSVQs
- ◆ recent school leavers, and candidates with their sights set on employment or higher education
- ◆ SWAP candidates
- ◆ candidates with special needs
- ◆ Modern Apprentices
- ◆ New Deal clients of all age groups
- ◆ employees on day release and other types of employment-related provision
- ◆ candidates coming in primarily for social and community-based purposes

Objectives for colleges' SGA planning

Objectives might include using SGAs to attract new markets, for example, through:

- ◆ providing alternative or new routes for candidates to get jobs or to progress in education
- ◆ providing more open access because of the possibility of extending individual choice and customising programmes for individuals
- ◆ bringing in new curriculum provision in response to a known demand which is currently unsatisfied
- ◆ extending provision to cater for candidates with abilities at a level which is currently not well provided for or not provided for at all

They might also include using SGAs to achieve aspects of the college's curriculum policy, for example, by:

- ◆ taking the opportunity to review the coherence of the college's whole curriculum map and timetable, and to review the extent of flexibility in the curriculum, and
- ◆ accelerating development of flexible learning provision
- ◆ accelerating comprehensive and readily accessible provision for Core Skills through the college
- ◆ formalising existing National Certificate and SWAP programmes through national group award certification
- ◆ extending or developing provision for candidates with special needs

- ◆ extending and consolidating aspects of provision such as candidate-centred guidance, learning support, initial diagnosis of entrants' learning needs
- ◆ extending and consolidating provision for candidates with special assessment requirements
- ◆ extending and consolidating the development of Course teams

Objectives might also include using SGAs as part of a wider objective to progress a coherent learning environment across a whole community.

The full potential of SGAs to provide learners in a community with genuine choice and maximum support throughout their programme is most likely to be achieved through a co-ordinated approach to strategic planning by everyone involved. An area group can include representatives of key stakeholders in education and training in a locality, including the education authority, secondary schools, special schools, universities, LEC, the Adult Guidance Network, and employers. The college Board of Management may already include such stakeholders, but the early stages of planning and implementing SGAs is likely to need more time than is generally available to Boards.

Fitting SGAs into the college curriculum map

Decisions on the target markets and college objectives will result in a wish list of the SGAs for which implementation will need to be planned.

Planning for the 1999-2000 session was small in scale. The main reasons given by colleges included lack of enough information and lack of key materials such as National Assessment Bank packs. Now that this information is becoming available, full-scale planning can start, at least for all levels up to Higher. During the year, as information becomes available, plans for Advanced Higher can be amalgamated.

How quickly can the full set of planned SGAs be introduced, and how will they be introduced?

Introduction into a college could take the following forms:

- ◆ in a co-ordinated 'big bang' launch
- ◆ sector by sector
- ◆ level by level
- ◆ in phases from scratch
- ◆ in phases as groups of candidates on GSVQ programmes finish their programmes

Apart from the size of the college and the extent of its specialist provision, there are inter-relating factors that are likely to influence these decisions:

1. Degree of change faced by key groups in the college
2. Likely patterns of recruitment and progression
3. How comprehensively and quickly the college can respond to candidates with different starting points for the same SGA
4. Curriculum coverage in the local area

We will consider each of these factors in the next paragraphs.

1. Degree of change faced by key groups in the college

For any SGA family or individual SGA, how feasible is it to introduce the programme in 2000-2001 in view of the impact on key groups and the scale of changes these groups may have to make? Areas of impact and changes are likely to include at least some of the following:

- ◆ the use of external assessments
- ◆ changes in content and approach in subject and vocational areas
- ◆ impact on current open and distance learning services
- ◆ impact on guidance services
- ◆ impact on resource centres and libraries
- ◆ impact on administrative services, including MIS

2. Likely patterns of recruitment and progression

Will there be demand for both Intermediate 2 and Higher SGA awards in the first year of introducing an SGA? Decisions may depend on whether GSVQs or SWAPs are already offered.

SQA will continue to support GSVQs for the full run-out period ending in 2004 so candidates will be able to complete their planned for GSVQ programmes of two years. Centres therefore have a choice of overlapping or meshing 'phasing in' and 'phasing

<p>Overlapping GSVQs and SGAs so that candidates already in a Level II GSVQs can progress to a Level III GSVQ whilst new candidates can start on an SGA at Intermediate 2.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> for candidates include the continuity in programme style, and especially the arrangements for the GSVQ Additional Assessment. This may be especially important where a GSVQ programme is offered through a school-college link.</p> <p><i>Disadvantages</i> include the relatively low key promotion of this award over its lifetime and the need for candidates to be able to explain the value of the award in future years.</p>	<p>Meshing SGA introductions and GSVQ run-outs so that as candidates finish a GSVQ they can progress to the next level of SGA.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> for GSVQ candidates include: the status of SGAs as recognition of a high level of achievement; the likely high profile national marketing of SGAs to employers and the general public; the possibility of credit transfer from GSVQs to SGAs.</p> <p><i>Disadvantages</i> include the need for candidates to adapt to new requirements for assessments and Core Skills profiles.</p>
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Will typical progression paths change? How are candidates likely to progress — from Intermediate 2 into an SVQ or to Higher SGA? From a Higher SGA to an Advanced Higher SGA, a Higher National award, an SVQ? College implementation studies have indicated that, for some SGAs, the interface with HNC/Ds could be problematic and may need adjustments to the minimum level of achievement for entry to the HN programmes.

Can SGAs link with SVQs? Is it possible or desirable to link some SGAs with SVQs? SVQs related to SGAs have some credit transfer value (this is indicated in the specification for each SGA). Candidates on day release at college could build on the work-based SVQ to get a full SGA.

Will any of these internal patterns of progression affect the number of places available to other client groups?

What is the relationship between SGAs and programmes of National Certificate Modules? Colleges will be free to offer their own programmes of National Units (as modules are now called), just as they are at present.

SQA is investigating ways of giving formal recognition to programmes of Units other than SGAs — one important source of these is New Deal — and the investigation will also consider ways of recognising other groupings which are steps to SVQs or SGAs, as well as existing National Certificate programmes and group awards. Existing National Certificate group awards will continue to be available until this issue is resolved. This implies that the purposes and candidate profile for all college National Certificate programmes will need to be analysed to make sure that the SGA equivalent can cover the important purposes of the NC programmes, or that other groupings can be made available for these purposes.

3. How comprehensively and quickly the college can respond to candidates with different starting points for the same SGA?

Examples of candidates with different starting points might include:

- ◆ candidates who have achieved SGA Units or even Courses whilst at school
- ◆ candidates with credits for Core Skills, capable of progressing to higher levels
- ◆ adults with earlier qualifications or no qualifications

4. Curriculum coverage in the local area

Taking the locality as a whole, is the entire SGA map for the area as comprehensive and coherent as possible, given the circumstances in the area?

Would some collaborative arrangements enhance the market?

In particular, has account been taken of activities in the local area such as Community Learning Plans, CommUnity Schools, Social Inclusion Partnerships, Adult Guidance Network plans, and Employment Service and LEC plans for New Deal and other training programmes.

Promoting SGAs

SGAs are new qualifications and, although named SGAs have evolved from GSVQs, they have some features which could be unfamiliar to prospective candidates, parents, employers, careers and guidance advisors, and higher education. Colleges may need to tell people about the qualifications themselves, as well about the SGA programme. The Higher Still Development Unit and SQA have published leaflets which start the process but, especially in the first few years, college managers will need to take an active role in promoting understanding of the purposes and benefits of the group awards. This may mean raising staff's awareness as well as that of prospective candidates.

Promotional materials which are readily available include:
SGAs: A Guide for Centres – a leaflet designed for staff which sets out the structure and types of SGAs, and the advantages of the awards for school and college candidates

Explaining National Qualifications

Higher Still: Information for Presenters

Who needs to know what?

The chart on the following pages could be used as a marketing planning checklist. It may also be useful for internal staff development.

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW WHAT?

	School candidates	School staff	Careers teachers	Parents	Employers	College information services	Adult guidance network	National & regional databases	HE staff Community Education	LEC New Deal area planning group	Others	Staff	Action required
What is an SGA?													
Position and role in SQA framework of qualifications including purpose, levels, progression routes and relationship with familiar qualifications such as GSVQs and SVQs													
Vocational 'families' available – named awards													
General awards													
Composition of all awards: Courses, Unit credits, assessment credits, Core Skills profile													
Features of named awards: specific and optional Courses and Units													
Benefits/potential of SGA													
Scottish Qualifications Certificate													
SGAs offered by the college													
Named and general awards													
Levels available													
Specific section — brief synopsis													
Optional Units available, brief synopsis especially in relation to progression routes													
Arrangements for Core Skills, including tailoring to individual profile already held by candidate, embedded Core Skills, arrangements for achieving rest of profile, along with other Units, taught classes, workshops, learning support, opportunities to aim for a higher level than that required													

	School candidates	School staff	Careers teachers	Parents	Employers	College information services	Adult guidance network	National & regional databases	HE staff Community Education	LEC New Deal area planning group	Others	Staff	Action required
Programme arrangements													
Length, hours, timetables, rooms, facilities and equipment													
Styles of learning and teaching													
Guidance and support													
Programme entry													
Formal entry qualifications, if any													
Interviewing													
Initial assessments; account taken for earlier qualifications, prior experience and learning and Progress File or equivalent													
Assessment													
Roles of internal and external and internal assessment													
Methods of internal Unit assessment													
Course assessments; different types; procedures													
use of estimates and appeals													
Administration													
Information about the college													

Targeting promotion

Colleges may wish to highlight particular purposes and characteristics of SGAs in their targeted promotional materials, for example, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Matrix for identifying purposes and characteristics relevant to specific groups

Purposes and characteristics of SGAs	Espcial benefits to:				
	Secondary school candidates parents	Young FE college candidates	Older FE college candidates	Employers of day release candidates	Higher education in general; SWAP
Promote coherence in the curriculum					
Help progression and promote progression routes, forming well defined pathways to further and higher education, training and employment					
Promote the acquisition of Core Skills, providing a nationally-recognised Core Skills profile					
Benchmark a level of attainment in knowledge and skills					
Ungraded, but the certificate shows the grades achieved in the external assessments of the Courses					
Have elements of internal assessment and external assessment					
Promote mixed forms of academic and vocational study					
Promote greater choice and more flexible combinations of learning					
Give candidates the choice of specialising or working in their area of interest and skill, while keeping their options open					
Previous learning can contribute					
Can be built up over time					

SGAs have some more **technical benefits** likely to be of interest to curriculum managers and staff development officers. SGAs:

- ◆ provide a voluntary, additional layer of certification on top of the primary layer of qualifications — Courses and Units — which have value in their own right
- ◆ help to ensure a national standard because of the combination of internal and external assessment
- ◆ have a core and options — loosely rather than heavily prescriptive

- ◆ incorporate rules of combination — design rules — which determine comparable levels and amounts of attainment across the whole academic and vocational curriculum

Appendix 6 of *Core Skills: Information for Senior Managers* provides material for presentations on Core Skills to candidates, employers and others in the community.

Key points in promoting SGAs to different kinds of candidates and to employers

Candidates who have been aiming for three to five Highers and then degrees in higher education

Particularly for high-ability candidates, SGAs encourage breadth and volume of learning and achievement.

Higher and Advanced Higher Scottish Group Awards, complete with their Core Skills profile, gives candidates the prestige of completing the most demanding programme in the National Qualifications family of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

Candidates need to be aware of the statement from COSHEP made in 1998: ‘Each HE institution should agree to regard the Advanced Higher on a similar footing to GCE Advanced level, recognising that recent research comparing Advanced Higher with A-level points to their broad equivalence in terms of demands on the candidate and of educational attainment. At the same time, COSHEP acknowledges that Advanced Higher and A-level are different measures of education attainment and the product of different educational systems.’

COSHEP also requested that HE institutions include information about Advanced Higher Courses in their entry criteria.

Candidates who have been aiming for one to two Highers and then employment or a Higher National Qualification

As with National Certificate group awards, when candidates achieve an SGA it will show that they have taken a meaningful programme of study that has defined progression routes. They will also have grades from their Courses, and have achieved a substantial Core Skills profile.

All candidates with specific vocational interests

There will be other subject-specific benefits of SGA that can be promoted, for example, quoting from Support Packs for SGAs:

‘Compared to the programmes they succeed, the SGAs in Construction reflect more accurately the diversity and complexity of the modern construction industry and take closer account of the likely progression routes to Higher National provision, degree programmes and employment in the industry.’

‘SGAs in Hospitality will give candidates the skills, knowledge and understanding required for entry into a wide range of occupations. The SGA at Intermediate 2 is a broad-based group award designed to give pathways into cookery, food and drink services, reception, and accommodation, thereby meeting local employer needs for multi-skilled employees.’

‘The SGA in Higher Social Care will give candidates knowledge and practical skills relating to a wide range of care issues. It is a specific award and involves a demanding programme which is designed to provide pathways into higher education in Social Care, Social Science or Social Work, There are many opportunities for those candidates who wish to gain employment in the wider community.’

Candidates with learning difficulties and special educational needs

Access level SGAs provide progression for candidates with learning difficulties and special educational needs — and this has not happened before. Also, they can be used for candidates who have difficulty with a full Standard Grade programme. They give national certification and provide for lateral (or horizontal) as well as upward (or vertical) progression.

Employers

Every effort has been made to involve employers through the development of the National Qualifications. They have been represented on groups in the development programme, and considerable work has been done through HSDU’s Employment and Training Group. Contacts have been made and maintained through networks such as Education Business Partnerships. New publicity throughout 2000 is raising awareness of the value of the programme to candidates of all ages.

Especially for SGAs, the efforts made to emphasise the value of progressive Core Skills development and the place of the Core Skills profile on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate stems directly from strong views from employment bodies during the 1990s. The national standards for Core Skills now in place owe much to input from employer organisations.

Part B: Planning, delivery and operation

3: Cross-college planning

Would a cross-college approach help?

Implementation at the level of individual SGAs may benefit if they all stem from a whole-college approach, for a number of reasons:

- ◆ SGAs will affect many areas of the curriculum
- ◆ some candidates will want to access other areas of the curriculum, for example, SVQs or more Highers
- ◆ curriculum infill can be more easily arranged
- ◆ some, perhaps many, candidates will want to access parts of the SGA curriculum, for example, Modern Apprentices and New Deal candidates taking Core Skills
- ◆ some areas of the curriculum will be common to several SGAs, for example, Business, Enterprise, Personal and Social Education, Science, Mathematics, and Language Courses and Units
- ◆ procedures for quality assurance, record keeping and administrative matters will be common across all SGAs
- ◆ especially for Core Skills, but also for other aspects of SGAs, there is likely to be a need for increased access to guidance, flexible learning Units, and learning support

If your college Course teams are working within a co-ordinated cross-college framework they are likely to be able to implement their SGAs more easily and offer the greatest possible access and choice to candidates.

Common systems

Some common systems across the college will help the smooth and effective introduction of SGAs. Although SGAs can be offered as self-contained group awards to discrete groups of candidates over fixed periods of time, the structure of SGAs allows for the construction of individual programmes to meet individual requirements and needs. For example, candidates should be able to:

- ◆ use as many of the optional Units in the chosen SGA as is feasible
- ◆ take other Courses or Units outside the chosen SGA
- ◆ achieve a higher level of Core Skill than specified, or concentrate mainly on a Core Skill to raise achievement from a low starting level to the required level

- ◆ achieve Units at the level above the level specified, or take a shortened programme or make accelerated progress if, for example, they have already previously achieved some parts of the SGA
- ◆ use accreditation of prior learning to accelerate progress towards achievement of the qualification
- ◆ take some Courses or Units by flexible or open learning or at another institution (for example in the Glasgow Telecollege's Network group and the University of the Highlands and Islands Project Network)
- ◆ gather evidence for some outcomes, such as outcomes in Communication, Numeracy and IT, from any relevant activity

The more the college provision of SGAs is standardised, the easier it will be for individuals to make use of the flexibility offered by SGAs. Colleges should benefit through the cost efficiency of common systems as far as possible.

What common systems and services can be developed?

At least some of the following systems and services are probably provided across the college. Where this is not possible, perhaps they can be established across a site or a department or faculty:

- ◆ Guidance and learning support services
 - enquiry and information service showing full SGA provision at programme, Course and Unit levels
 - Gateway materials and provision
 - common start and finishing times for induction, at the beginning of each programme and each teaching block
 - standardised approach to initial assessment, at least of Core Skills
 - early identification of a need for special assessment arrangements
- ◆ Use of flexible learning Units and resource centres to support SGAs
 - possible extension of accommodation and resources, especially IT equipment
 - possible extension of hours of access to the facilities
 - more staffing
 - purchase of learning materials
 - production and adaptation of learning materials
 - establishing a college house style for materials such as assignment guides, assessment sheets, logs, etc
 - a database of assignments and materials
 - means for tracking candidates' use of the facilities
- ◆ Formation and development of a Core Skills team or teams
 - to deliver dedicated Core Skills Units

- to work with subject staff where Core Skills are embedded
- ◆ Timetables and calendars
 - number and length of blocks
 - common start and finishing times for teaching blocks
 - common entry times, for example at the start of each block
 - daily starts and finishes, day and evening
 - number of taught hours per Unit
 - specified slots for mandatory Units, Core Skills, tutorials
 - proportion of time allocated to self study, use of resource centre
- ◆ Quality assurance
 - systems for standardising arrangements for external assessment and appeals
 - adjustments to internal moderation
- ◆ MIS
 - tracking individual's achievements
 - common system for recording
- ◆ Staffing
 - college SGA co-ordinator
 - SGA programme teams and programme leaders
- ◆ Staff development
 - external assessment
 - Core Skills
 - MIS
 - networking for subject staff
- ◆ Administration

4: Programme design

Once market research has identified potential target candidates, designing arrangements for the delivery of an SGA is likely to involve Course teams in activities such as a review of existing provision and decisions on the framework, content, and delivery patterns.

There is more information about programme design, and examples, in *Implementation Studies for Colleges: Scottish Group Awards*

Review of college-devised National Certificate programmes and GSVQs

For each existing programme, questions to ask include:

- ◆ can it be accommodated in an SGA?
- ◆ can it be readily converted to a named SGA using the validation procedures?
- ◆ can it readily be converted to a general SGA?
- ◆ should it continue as it is?

Decisions on the framework:

- ◆ the length of the year and learning blocks
- ◆ time in classes and timetabled time for other modes of learning
- ◆ numbers per class
- ◆ scope for full-time and part-time delivery
- ◆ scope for day and evening delivery
- ◆ scope for flexible or open learning delivery
- ◆ restrictions which may arise from bursary considerations, for example, provision of a pre-programme period concentrating on Core Skills
- ◆ the needs of some progression routes, for example, an 'Intermediate 2.5' programme (Intermediate 2 SGA with some more Higher Courses or Units for high flyers able to go beyond the minimum Intermediate 2 requirement. Candidates achieving above the minimum will have this achievement recorded on their certificate.)

Decisions on programme content and delivery patterns:

- ◆ the optional Units from the specification which can be made available
- ◆ any need for prior entry requirements and/or initial diagnosis

- ◆ the delivery model — whether Unit based, integrated or mixed — if Units and Courses are delivered and internally assessed in an integrated way, will this prevent access to candidates from outside the SGA who might want to take a particular Unit? Is a strong group identity more important to certain users than maximum choice and flexibility of provision? Factors which have a bearing here include:
 - the need for programme flexibility because of substantially different starting points of candidates
 - the need for learning support
 - need for special assessment arrangements
 - the induction
- ◆ staff allocations
- ◆ staff development needs
- ◆ development of learning and teaching materials and equipment; library resources
- ◆ room allocations

5: Programme delivery

The two main areas of change needed to introduce an SGA are likely to be ensuring due emphasis on Core Skills and assessment, both of which are reviewed in later parts of this section.

Resources supporting SGA programme delivery

Information about delivery of Scottish Group Awards is to be found across a range of documents. You should ensure that teaching staff, guidance staff and administrative staff have easy access to all the material related to their SGAs and, where it is needed, more general information about National Qualifications. Building up these banks of resources can start well in advance of implementation.

See also *Catalogue of Support Material for Higher Still in FE Colleges*.

The key resources supporting programme delivery are:

- ◆ Scottish Group Award specifications
- ◆ Support Packs for Scottish Group Awards which are published for each SGA family
- ◆ Arrangements documents for Courses (including their component National Units)
- ◆ Subject Guides (published by HSDU)
- ◆ Specifications for free-standing National Units
- ◆ Access publications
- ◆ *Core Skills: Information for Senior Managers in FE Colleges*
- ◆ National Assessment Bank packs
- ◆ *Scottish Group Awards Arrangements for External Assessment: [SGA family]*
- ◆ *Guidance on Special Arrangements and Certification Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs and Candidates whose First Language is not English*
- ◆ *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education*

Scottish Group Award specifications

SGA specifications contain the following sections:

- ◆ Summary of requirements
- ◆ Summary of rules for credit contribution, covering matters such as substitutions possible within hierarchies of Courses and Units and the rules on double counting
- ◆ Specific section which lists: mandatory Courses, mandatory Units, mandatory combinations of Courses and/or Units, mandatory Core Skills requirements, and optional Courses and Units
- ◆ Open section (in some SGA specifications) which lists qualifications that are not already listed in the specific section but can contribute a given number of credits towards the group award. As well as National Units and National Courses, this can include Standard Grades, Highers, and SVQs, and free-standing Core Skills Units (the summary is expanded in later parts of the specification).
- ◆ Programme advice, for some SGA specifications, which gives advice on possible groupings of Units and Courses
- ◆ Core Skills — the profile required

There are new and revised Arrangements documents for each SGA family, incorporating details of the new Courses. Detailed external assessment specifications will be become available during 2000. Arrangements documents will be available on the website at www.sqa.org.uk/higher-still and on CD-ROM.

The specification for each SGA gives the rules for credit contribution, and details on which substitutions are possible. For example, there are details on:

- ◆ Hierarchical sequences — Courses and Units can be replaced by those with the same title at a higher level, eg Media Studies (H) can be substituted for Media Studies (Int2)
- ◆ Double counting, for example:
 - Courses and Units with the same title at different levels cannot both contribute credits to the SGA, eg **either** Geography (H) **or** Geography (AH)
 - Courses at the same level in the same subject cannot both contribute credits to the SGA, eg **either** the National Courses in French at Higher **or** SCE Higher French
 - the same Courses with different grades cannot both contribute credits to the SGA, eg **either** English (H) at grade A **or** English (H) at grade C
- ◆ Standard Grades that can contribute credit to the SGA
- ◆ SCE Highers that can contribute credit to the SGA
- ◆ SVQs that can contribute credit to the SGA

Support Packs for Scottish Group Awards

There are Support Packs for each named SGA family (see Section 1) and for general SGAs at each level. They:

- ◆ introduce the family
- ◆ introduce each SGA in the family, giving information about the rationale and purpose of the award and its key features, the access arrangements, guidance on candidate choice and progression, and Core Skills.

Support Packs already published for each SGA family are being up-dated to incorporate information about new Courses. New editions will be issued from April 2000.

Arrangements documents for Courses (including their component National Units)

Arrangements documents provide:

- ◆ an introduction including the rationale and aims of the subject and the Courses in the subject
- ◆ detailed advice on Course content
- ◆ detailed advice on Course assessment
- ◆ advice on learning and teaching approaches, including, for example, recommendations related to integration (Courses, Units, assessment) and bi-level delivery, of especial interest to Courses that are used in SGAs

Arrangements documents are published for all subjects and available on CD-ROM and the website www.sqa.org.uk/higher-still. Documents have been subject to updating and a new CD-ROM will be issued in 2000, with paper reports outlining significant changes.

Subject Guides

Subject Guides are available for the 42 subject areas. They provide information on:

- ◆ the rationale for the subject in the post-16 curriculum
- ◆ the relationship between existing or previous practice and the new National Qualifications
- ◆ resources which are widely used and continue to be useful, and new resources provided for implementation
- ◆ advice on learning and teaching in Units and Courses, including induction, consolidation of learning, and transference of skills and knowledge
- ◆ initial information about assessment, Core Skills and support materials
- ◆ the titles of Courses and Units which fall in the subject framework

They may also have supplements such as material to promote the vocational relevance of subjects, the incorporation of cross-curricular themes, induction across an institution, departments and classes, and management of assessment.

New information on Core Skills will be produced as supplements to Subject Guides. These will offer advice about how to assess Core Skills in combination with subjects Units, where this can be achieved without unduly increasing workload. If you use this material you can be confident that, where the Core Skill is delivered along with the subject, as advised, and using the material provided, it is being done in a way which is likely to meet SQA quality assurance requirements. Where staff develop their own approaches and materials, you should ensure that, although integrated with a subject-specific Course or Unit, the Core Skill is validly assessed at the level required for the SGA.

Free-standing National Unit Specifications

These documents are updated National Certificate Module descriptors and former SEB Short Courses. The support notes of these documents may contain useful information on learning and teaching approaches, as for subject Arrangements documents.

Access publications

The rationale and purpose of National Qualifications at Access level and guidance on the provision of Units, clusters and group awards is given in *Introduction to Managing Access*, *Managing Access Provision* and *Developing an Appropriate Curriculum Using Access Provision*.

For more information about *Core Skills: Information for Senior Managers in Further Education Colleges*, see page 36.

National Assessment Bank packs

See 'Managing assessment' in Section 8 (page 43).

Scottish Group Awards: Arrangements for project-based National Courses

These documents will become available family by family during 2000. They provide an overview of the SGAs in the family, identifying the Courses and associated external assessments that can count towards the qualification. Each document:

- ◆ Lists the Courses in the SGA.
- ◆ Makes reference to the Arrangements documents where information on the assessment of Courses developed in the first phase of Courses development is to be found.
- ◆ Provides information on the structure and assessment of those Courses developed in the second phase of Course development. This includes the assessment project method (Investigation, Extended Case Study or Practical Assignment) specified for each Course, conditions for assessment, information on marking and grading, general information on the required Core Skills profile, special assessment arrangements, estimates and appeals.

The SQA publication *Guidance on Special Arrangements and Certification Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs and Candidates whose First Language is not English* gives information on the procedures to be used for candidates with special needs.

The SQA *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education* is the source for general advice on all aspects of assessment.

Joint delivery

Programmes incorporating any of the new National Qualifications, including SGAs that are planned and delivered through partnerships will probably need to be developed case by case.

See also *Implementation Studies for College: School – College Links*

School–college links for the delivery of GSVQs and for other programmes of support for schools will depend on the timelines for the school's and the college's department/sections.

Full-time New Deal programmes

New Deal strategic partnerships may decide to fund SGA programmes for full-time clients, especially if the programme can be closely linked to an employer-based SVQ.

SWAP development and the development of tailored programmes run in partnership between college and training providers/employers similarly may depend on the 'state of readiness factors' for all the partners. The SWAP Consortia have consulted on proposals for replacement programmes which will use National Qualification Courses and Units. A SWAP-devised Preparation for Higher Education Unit will also be available.

6: Core Skills

Core Skill requirements in SGAs and how they can be met

Candidates have to achieve a specified level of Core Skills to be awarded an SGA:

- ◆ For general SGAs (except Advanced Higher) the minimum level required is the level below the level of the award, except for Access 2, where Core Skills must also be achieved at Access 2 level.
- ◆ For the general SGA at Advanced Higher the minimum level required is three Core Skills at Higher and two at Intermediate 2. This is the exit profile — candidates would be expected to go into the award with a Core Skill profile of all five skills at Intermediate 2. If they do not, then they will need to pick up two at Intermediate 2, but these will have to be in addition to the total Unit credits needed for the Advanced Higher SGA.
- ◆ For the named SGAs at Intermediate 2 and Higher, the minimum level required is specific to the individual awards; it is usually a mixture of the level of the award and the level below the level of the award.

The key source of information is: *Core Skills: Information for Senior Managers* (versions for sectors). This has an extensive section on managing Core Skills as well as the Core Skills Framework, National Core Skills Units, a map of Core Skills and Core Skills components embedded in Standard Grade and in National Courses, and other material specifically referred to below. For more detail see also *Core Skills Checklists, Implementation Studies for Colleges: Core Skills, Questions and Answers*, and the catalogue *Automatic Certification of Core Skills in National Qualifications*.

The requirements for SGA Core Skills can be met in a number of ways. Some candidates will have achieved Core Skills before entry to the SGA because Core Skills are embedded in some Standard Grade Courses and, from 2000, SCE Highers will have been audited for embedded Core Skills. Candidates who complete these Courses will have the Core Skill automatically certificated. This recognition will be administered nationally by SQA.

Core Skills are embedded in some Intermediate 2 and Higher Courses and Units, which make up SGAs. So, for many candidates, certification of Core Skills will be automatic and based on the successful completion of the Courses and Units in which the Core Skills are incorporated.

Credit transfer: former National Certificate Core Skills Modules will allow candidates to gain recognition through the new Core Skills profile, at the following levels:

NC Core Skills stage	National Core Skill level
Starter	Access 2
1	Access 3
2	Intermediate 1
3	Intermediate 2
4	Higher

Note about National Certificate Modules

The NC Modules in Numeracy, IT, and Problem Solving are withdrawn from the 2000 *National Qualifications Catalogue*, with a two-year completion period during which they may be offered, though centres are encouraged to move to the new Units as soon as possible.

The former NC Modules in Communication 1–4 will be retained in the catalogue.

Some former National Certificate Modules that carry personal and interpersonal skills have been revised to ensure coverage of both Problem Solving and Working with Others, and are now National Units. These are: Work Experience 1-4, Enterprise Activity 1-3, Residential Experience 1-4, Experiencing Europe 1-4, Local Investigations 1-4, Investigating Europe 1-4. These former NC modules and new National Units are interchangeable for SGAs. The Units feature in a number of SGAs, and, at the appropriate level, will allow candidates to gain a Core Skills profile entry for Working with Others and Problem Solving. Contemporary Issues will give credit for Working with Others.

For some candidates, neither credit transfer or automatic accreditation will cover the required profile. For these candidates Core Skill certification can be achieved through the dedicated Core Skill Units from the options section of the SGA. Where the dedicated Units are used, the assessment of the Core Skill proceeds on the basis of normal Unit assessment, and the standard quality assurance procedures apply. The dedicated Units may count as Unit credits in SGAs as well as being counted towards meeting the required Core Skills profile if the candidate wishes.

In view of the flexibility of SGAs, there is a high probability that the majority of school-leaving SGA entrants will have achieved much of the required Core Skill profile before entering the SGA programme. Most school candidates should have attained Communication, Numeracy, and Problem Solving at the level of their Standard Grade through the Core Skills embedded in these Courses. This will carry forward as credit towards an SGA. It seems likely that the main tasks for colleges will be to find ways:

- ◆ to provide for school leavers who need to achieve Working with Others and Information Technology
- ◆ to gain an accurate picture of the Core Skills profile of adult entrants and arrangements to help such entrants to meet SGA requirements
- ◆ for all candidates, to ensure provision to allow candidates to build on their entry levels of achievement and ‘add value’ to their eventual SGA certificate

Of all the Core Skills, Problem Solving is the most likely to be achieved without the need for the use of the dedicated Unit — either through being embedded in the Courses, Units or project-based external assessments of the group award, or because of prior achievement. Where it is not fully embedded, there is again a high probability that the Critical Thinking element will have been covered.

The range of arrangements by which candidates can achieve the Core Skills profile required for an SGA, including Unit delivery, credit transfer and embedding and automatic certification are a new and distinctive feature of the National Qualifications at Access 2 to Advanced Higher. There is no equivalent system in the rest of the UK, where key skills have Unit certification.

There is likely to be a lot of interest in making the Core Skill delivery process worthwhile so that candidates experience smooth and realistic progression in their Core Skills development and have opportunities to practise and reinforce their skills and consciously apply them, especially in new contexts. Cases where candidates and trainees report that they have made lateral rather than upward progress in Core Skills development should become things of the past.

Delivery and assessment of embedded Core Skills

You should ensure that candidates know: what Core Skills are embedded in their Units and Courses of their programme; the importance of the skills in the context of the subject; and how they are delivered through the Course.

Where Core Skills or Core Skill components are embedded in a Unit or a Course, assessment of the Core Skill or component will be a natural part of the assessment of the Unit or Course. No more assessment or collection of evidence will be necessary, either for the Unit or the component, though the college will need to retain the evidence for moderation.

It is possible to teach and assess Core Skills in a vocational context through building the various outcomes into a programme such as an SGA. *Core Skills: Information for Senior Managers* provides a review of the opportunities.

Delivery and assessment of Core Skill Units

Core Skill Units can be delivered separately or with one or more Courses or Units. Indications from Implementation Studies are that delivery of at least Information Technology and Working with Others with a subject could be advantageous for the subject. More studies are in progress and examples and advice will follow as supplements to Subject Guides (see the section on resources for delivery of SGAs).

Where a dedicated Core Skill Unit is used, normal Unit assessment and quality assurance procedures will apply. NAB packs are available for all dedicated Core Skill Units from Access 2 to Higher. They are written in general terms and so lend themselves to use in any context.

Core Skills: Information for Senior Managers provides information and a review of the advantages and disadvantages of options for Unit delivery: delivery as free-standing Units as pre-entry activity, as a cluster in the early weeks of a programme, or spread over the year.

Delivery and assessment of individual components of Core Skills

There will be situations where the candidate has achieved a Course or Unit that embeds some, but not all, of the components of the Core Skill required for an SGA. The candidate should be entered for the dedicated Core Skill Unit and complete the desired top-up of any missing component outcomes. This may be done in a subject context or through assignments which have been specially designed to cover the missing Core Skills components in contexts such as work experience or the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. In such cases it may be possible to use the Progress File (NRA) to record evidence.

Examples are given in the *Core Skills Manual*. Appendix 4 of the manual provides detailed information on delivering and assessing Core Skills in combination with specialist subjects through assignments, and then claiming the Unit on behalf of the candidate.

Core Skills: Information for Senior Managers points out that colleges will identify certain programmes where many candidates are likely to have a Core Skill gap. Managers will then consider the means by which the whole Core Skill or the necessary component(s) can be covered by an activity that all candidates experience.

Delivery arrangements

Core Skills have featured in previous group awards, and colleges have expertise in delivering them at all levels of ability. Many colleges have developed flexible delivery systems, and in many cases these have been expanded as part of the response to New Deal. However, the implementation of National Qualifications is likely to demand expanded provision from every college. Another requirement of National Qualifications is likely to be the need for tracking individual candidates to make sure that they do in fact achieve their required Core Skill profile.

Patterns for delivery of Core Skills being considered and developed by colleges are a mixture of many of the elements below:

- ◆ A central Core Skills team comprising, for example, some subject based tutors, some specialist Core Skills tutors, library resource centre staff, extra-curricular representatives (eg for the Prince's Trust). Such a team might be responsible for developing policy, new systems for delivery, systems for record keeping and tracking, monitoring the level of emphasis placed on Core Skills by SGA

teams, and ensuring that Core Skills are delivered and assessed where they are embedded.

- ◆ Different Core Skills are the responsibility of different departments, with designated Core Skills specialists delivering Units discretely but in vocational contexts so far as possible.
- ◆ For named group awards, delivery and assessment by vocational/subject lecturers/departments (full contextualisation).
- ◆ Cover of needed skills and levels through flexible learning arrangements; some timetabled time in learning centres.

Complementary activities being considered and developed include:

- ◆ the use of initial diagnostic assessment (see Guidance section below) and individual training plans
- ◆ initial sessions by Core Skills tutors to induct candidates and set an action plan with targets for improving Core Skills and working out how to achieve these
- ◆ provision of specialist help where needed by individuals
- ◆ workshops on particular Core Skills at appropriate levels for a whole candidate group, for example, on basics of numeracy and IT
- ◆ Core Skills specialists team-teaching with vocational lecturers and/or working out teaching and assessment plans together
- ◆ IT systems for candidate records and tracking

7: Guidance

Some aspects of the development of guidance specific to SGAs should transfer from GSVQ guidance provision; others will need new arrangements.

Admissions, interviews and selection

An early step will be the specification by subject specialists on the entry requirements of their SGAs.

The main new feature of recruitment to SGAs is likely to be a need for initial individual comparisons of the candidates' prior qualifications and Core Skills profile, and identification of those Units or Courses in the SGA which may already have been achieved. For candidates coming from school this can mainly be done through:

- ◆ checks on the most up-to-date SQA certificate (the Scottish Qualifications Certificate) held by the candidate, since this lists qualifications cumulatively and forms a complete record of formal qualifications already (since 1994) achieved
- ◆ using the Progress File (NRA) or equivalent records from New Deal graduates and those in employment — these are likely to be most useful in establishing an accurate entry level of Core Skills, perhaps especially for Working with Others, and Problem Solving

Initial diagnostic assessment

Adults and some school leavers may need a fairly formal process of initial diagnostic assessment. This can:

- ◆ ensure that they are placed on programmes appropriate for their aspirations, abilities and needs, and that they progress in their achievements rather than undergo repetitive experiences
- ◆ check that they have a reasonable chance of achieving the Core Skills profile at the level needed for the award (or that they might be able to take on a higher level of Core Skill than that needed for the SGA)
- ◆ identify learning support needs

Sources of information include *Implementation Studies in Colleges: Guidance*, the *National Qualifications Catalogue* for the current year, *Automatic Certification of Core Skills in National Qualifications, Hierarchical Sequences*, the *Progress, PlanIT, TargIT* and *Skillsfile* data bases, *Managing Guidance Time: A planning Tool*, *Guidance Arrangements for Higher Still* and, more generally, the website: www.sqa.org.uk/higher-still

Core Skills Checklists form a starting point for the development of tasks for initial diagnostic assessment.

It is unlikely that candidates coming into an SGA will follow identical programmes.

Induction

Induction should, as usual, make sure that candidates are thoroughly informed and are comfortable with the features of their programmes. Some features of SGAs are likely to be unfamiliar to many candidates, so managers from different parts of the college should take stock to ensure that, between them, any general induction and subject-specific inductions cover the following:

- ◆ the Course and Unit structure of the qualification
- ◆ mandatory and optional Units
- ◆ choice available
- ◆ progression routes — FE, HE, training and employment
- ◆ assessment — internal and external
- ◆ for some Courses in named awards — new, project types of Course assessment
- ◆ Core Skills, their importance as generic skills valued by employers which, especially with time and practice, are transferable, that is, applied in many different situations (especially important where Core Skills are embedded in the SGA)
- ◆ the certification and how it shows the added value of the award

Tracking and on-Course guidance

Some colleges are considering using a group tutor for SGAs but, whatever the means, managers should ensure that the guidance roles and responsibilities of lecturers, guidance and administration staff for tracking and reviewing the progress of individual learners are clearly delineated and are known to all.

Gateway (0141-422 1070) can provide software for tracking.

There should also be early warning systems so that candidates who are in danger of missing some essential feature of their hoped-for SGA are spotted in enough time for more support to be offered. An example of a situation to avoid is where a candidate narrowly fails one external Course assessment, resulting in a Course award at the level below the assessed level — thus not only failing the Course but also failing to have all their achievements recognised as a Scottish Group Award.

8: Managing assessment

SGAs at Access 2 and Access 3 are internally assessed. SGAs at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher are assessed both internally and externally.

The two modes of assessment have different purposes. External assessment tests the retention and integration of knowledge and skills, and increases the reliability of assessment. Internal assessment allows a larger sample of knowledge and skills to be assessed, and allows candidates to build up achievement in small steps.

For general advice on all aspects of assessment, see: *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education*. For specific information see *Scottish Group Awards: Arrangements for project-based National Courses*: [SGA Family].

Internal assessment and moderation – what is new?

Changes to the arrangements for the internal assessment and moderation of National Units (including Courses and free-standing Units) in SGAs are not extensive.

Subject-specific advice on National Unit assessment is given in Arrangements documents and National Unit specifications.

Compared to the arrangements for National Certificate Modules, internal assessment of National Units (whether Course or free standing) now involves the following:

- ◆ availability of National Assessment Bank materials
- ◆ new advice on re-assessment
- ◆ advice on authentication of candidate evidence
- ◆ centre moderation

National Assessment Bank

The formation of the National Assessment Bank (NAB) is the main change affecting internal assessment. By mid-2000, NAB packs will be available for National Units in SGAs at Higher, Intermediate 2, Intermediate 1 and most Access Units. NAB packs are also available for all Core Skill Units. Packs for Advanced Higher Units will be available from May 2000.

The first set of NAB packs contains information on the organisation and conditions for Unit assessment, assessment instrument(s), marking guidelines, and information on recording and retaining evidence and candidate information.

Subsequent packs will contain assessment instruments and marking guidelines only.

Given that NAB packs contain instruments of assessment and marking schemes which teaching staff may use, NAB materials (except for the candidate information) should not be made available to candidates. You should store NAB packs securely, and avoid storage anywhere where candidates could get access to them.

The National Assessment Bank will be a permanent resource. In the short term, SQA and HSDU will provide additional advice and information of the use of NABs in response to centre's practical experience of using them. The Bank will be updated and added to over time so that, eventually, in some subject areas, it will provide up to five test instruments for each Unit. This will happen in a variety of ways, including material being developed by SQA and centres. The Bank is not expected to reach its steady state until March 2003.

Centres can make minor changes to NAB items, such as alterations to data in Maths and Science questions, and (for the time being) make a note of these for moderation. If more significant changes have been made, the amended version must be included with candidate evidence if the Unit is selected for moderation. If you are in doubt about how far an item can be changed, you can submit changed items for prior moderation.

Centres can develop their own assessment instruments for Units, rather than, or as well as, using NAB items. Prior moderation of these instruments is encouraged, but this will not be compulsory except where a Unit assessment embeds assessment for Core Skill components. In this case, the NAB materials should be used or the alternative should be submitted to the SQA Assessment Moderation Unit at Dalkeith for prior moderation.

If you do write your own instruments as well as, or instead of, NAB material:

- ◆ adhere to the content and standards set out in Arrangements documents and Unit Specifications
- ◆ in general, aim for integrated assessments; you do not need to use instruments of assessment to assess each outcome or performance criterion separately
- ◆ produce checklists and marking schemes to show acceptable responses or solutions
- ◆ involve everyone who will use or moderate assessment instruments and who will moderate candidates' responses in vetting the instruments.

If candidates produce valid responses which are not covered by the marking scheme in a NAB pack, teaching staff can use professional judgement and accept these responses. It would be useful to make a note of such cases for moderation, and eventual up-dating of the NAB pack.

Re-assessment

Arrangements for re-assessment of Unit outcomes have changed somewhat. The **advice** from SQA and HMI is that there should only be one re-assessment. Only in exceptional circumstances, as judged desirable by the centre, should candidates be offered a further re-assessment. (References in NAB packs that do not follow such advice should be ignored.). For consistency, you could produce for staff a list of circumstances in which re-assessment could be considered, but ask that requests are approved by a designated person.

Authentication of candidates' evidence

For external as well as internal assessment, most concern about authenticity arises in connection with work produced outwith the controlled conditions of the examination room. The form of candidate attendance is likely to present a greater challenge to colleges than schools.

Where group work is part of the assessment arrangements, for example, in collecting data, the point at which candidates have to revert to working on their own should be made clear — normally this is when a candidate's report on the activity has to be produced. Although it should be permissible for preparatory work to be done under periodic rather than continual supervision, perhaps even outwith the centre, the final write-up of the evidence for assessment should occur under controlled conditions. These conditions should normally include:

- ◆ accommodation set out as an examination room
- ◆ continual supervision by a member of centre staff
- ◆ normal examination room restrictions on candidates communicating with one another
- ◆ adherence to a specified time allocation
- ◆ use of a 'closed book' exercise, for a written product, with a tight specification of the material which the candidates are permitted to bring into the room. That might simply be a report structure, limited to, say, 300 words on one side of A4.

For an artefact such as might be produced in a craft and design Course, it is likely that the lecturer will have observed the production through all the stages, so authenticity should not be an issue.

Centre moderation

SQA will also monitor the quality of internal assessment through computerised cross-checking of internal and external results. Any significant disparities noted will give rise to the centre concerned being selected for moderation to identify and rectify problems.

Arrangements for internal assessment and moderation

Internal assessment

Where National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials exist, lecturers will usually use them — they are designed to be valid and reliable. Where the NAB builds up to five test instruments for each Unit this should ensure enough choice and confidentiality.

The checklist below summarises arrangements for managing internal assessment. You could use it to monitor SGA internal assessments and for staff development.

This summary is expanded in *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education*.

Gathering evidence

- ◆ Collect candidate evidence under controlled conditions that are consistent across the college
- ◆ Especially for the project-based types of assessment used in many of the named SGAs, decide in advance whether assessors will need to authenticate candidates' evidence and how they should do this; then make sure the agreed process is consistently adhered to

Assessment decisions

- ◆ Check the consistency of assessment decisions to ensure that there is no bias on the part of assessors and that candidates are assessed on the actual evidence they present, regardless of previous performance
- ◆ Make sure that all valid responses from candidates are accepted
- ◆ Follow SQA advice that re-assessment is only permitted once, except in special circumstances — agree what these circumstances are and make sure all assessors know about them
- ◆ If there is a re-assessment, make sure that it is valid and of equal demand
- ◆ Store candidate evidence, assessment materials and records, and/or send them to SQA in line with external moderation requirements

Internal moderation

Internal moderation for National Qualifications is a fully-developed element of quality assurance. The systems used are unlikely to be much different from those that exist already.

External assessment and moderation

External assessment in SGAs is always carried out through the assessment of Courses. This sub-section is extensive since it provides up-to-date information on the features of the two main types of external assessment for Courses in SGAs, together with advice on the management of Course assessments. Also, the change to Course assessment is one of the biggest changes to be faced by many staff in colleges as they begin to offer SGAs. A key task for managers is to determine how best to provide for external assessments without causing a move to unduly formal, assessment-driven delivery patterns.

Detailed information on the structure and assessment of both examination-based Courses and project-based Courses is provided in the National Course Specifications in Arrangements documents for each subject.

Some Courses are assessed either solely by a written examination (question paper) or by a written examination in combination with another method such as:

- ◆ investigations and dissertations
- ◆ oral assessment
- ◆ observation of performance or skill demonstration

Some Courses, especially those in SGAs in the vocational areas, are externally assessed solely by assessment project. There are three types of external assessment project:

- ◆ investigation
- ◆ practical assignment
- ◆ extended case study

An important message for candidates and users of SGAs is that all external Course assessments across the entire set of SGAs at a level are **equivalent in demand**, whatever the assessment method used.

All external Course assessments share key characteristics. These are summarised in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Generic features of external Course assessments

Based on Courses	External assessments are based on Courses all of which comprise three-Unit credits and one assessment credit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SGAs at Intermediate 2 need 2 Course assessments at Intermediate 2 • SGAs at Higher need 3 Course assessments at Higher • SGAs at Advanced Higher need 3 Course assessments at Advanced Higher
Test important skills, knowledge and application	External assessment tests the integration of skills and knowledge across the Units of the Courses and requires application of that skill and knowledge to new contexts. It covers important subject areas in terms of candidates' career and progression planning.
Standard arrangements for recognising Core Skills	Core Skills are recognised either through attainment of Course Units or other qualifications that contain them or through success in a Core Skills Unit.
Benchmarked	All the assessments are benchmarked against current provision.
Safety net	Candidates who narrowly fail a Course assessment at one level can be awarded an assessment credit at the level below, if the Courses exists at the level below.
Graded	All external assessments are graded at A, B or C.
Normally require estimates	Centres use evidence from internally-assessed work to estimate candidates' likely achievements in the external components of the qualifications. If no estimate is given by a centre, candidates will not be able to appeal.
Standard arrangements for setting and marking	External assessments use assessment instruments which have assessment schemes or marking instructions, developed by SQA, which ensure that assessors are using the same approach to arrive at assessment decisions.
Standard arrangements for examinations and other forms of assessment	External assessments must operate in specified assessment conditions. At least some candidate evidence must be produced in examination room conditions.
Standard procedural arrangements	Arrangements for candidate entry, procedures for appeals and for special assessment arrangements apply for all Courses.
Essential for certification of the Course	Candidates can take a Course assessment without completing the component Course Units. However, to gain a Course award and have this certificated on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate, the candidate must have achieved all the component Units and have gained at least a pass in external assessment.

Differences between Course assessments that are mainly examination-based and those that are project-based are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Differences between assessments that are examination-based and those that are project-based

Mainly examination-based assessment	Project-based assessment
The written examination may be the whole assessment or part of it with the rest being made up of assignments, etc.	The project (Investigation, Extended Case Study or Practical Assignment) comprises the whole assessment. All project-based assessments involve elements of assessment in examination room conditions.
Course assessments aim to externally assess all the outcomes from the Units of the Courses and doing so focus on the breadth of the candidate's knowledge and understanding, skills and learning.	Course assessments use the project approach that can generate substantial amounts of candidate evidence and can focus on the depth of candidate's achievements. A minimum of 70% of outcomes will be covered and the specifications will assess any outcomes that are identified as critical elements of the Course.
Written examinations are offered for all subjects in the summer examination diet and for a limited number of Courses in the winter diet which will be introduced in 2001/2002.	Depends on timetabling of the component Course Units in centres and dates agreed with SQA for presenting or submitting evidence. Investigations and Case Studies can be submitted monthly. Assignments, twice a year at dates to suit the centre.
Time allocations and conditions may differ according to the assessment instrument used in each case.	Standard time allocations and conditions for assessment.
Grade descriptions are given in the Arrangements documents for grades A and C. Grade B is arrived at statistically.	Grade descriptions are standardised for all three types of assessment, for example, all Investigations at Intermediate 2 level use the same set of grade descriptions, whatever the subject being assessed. Grade descriptions are given for grades A, B and C.
Marking schemes are devised for each assessment instrument.	Courses are assessed and marked holistically using general marking schemes for each type of assessment.
Estimates made on basis of Course Unit assessments, NAB items or prelims.	Estimates from Unit assessment or draft project evidence.

More about project-based assessment

There are three types of project-based assessment: investigation, extended case study, and practical assignment.

The type of project to be used to assess each Course is mandatory and specified in SGA Arrangements documents.

The format of these three types of assessment is similar. Each is built on a general specification providing candidates with some information which they can then build on to develop the project. The investigation, extended case study, and practical assignment are different in terms of the areas of ability targeted, and the way in which each approach allows candidates to apply their knowledge, skills, and understanding.

Figure 7 (page 51) summarises the key feature of the three types of project-based external assessment instrument.

The evidence produced must meet the requirements for the outcomes in the Units covered by the project. In addition, each of the three types of assessment instrument require candidates to produce specified items of evidence about the planning, development and evaluation of their work. Project-based assessments usually embed the Core Skill Problem Solving; Working with Others is embedded in some cases.

A substantial amount of the candidate's work must be produced in supervised environments and, for most projects, a proportion of any written work must be produced under controlled conditions.

In general SGAs, most Course assessments are examination-based. In named SGAs, there is often a mixture of methods of Course assessment. For example, in a Higher named SGA there may be one examination-based assessment, one investigation, and one extended case study; or one of each type of investigation, extended case study and practical assignment.

Figure 7: Key Features of Investigations Practical Assignments and Extended Case Studies

Investigation	Practical assignment	Extended case study
<p>Designed to emphasise skills of <i>research, analysis and reporting</i></p> <p>Candidates will have a choice of topic.</p> <p>They will be expected to produce evidence of attainment related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● selecting a topic for the investigation ● identifying issues for research ● selecting/devising and using research techniques ● collating interpreting and analysing data ● presenting findings and conclusions ● evaluating the evidence <p>Evidence of candidate performance that will be centrally marked, by SQA, must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a plan of action ● an investigation report ● evidence showing evaluation/review of the investigation 	<p>The practical assignment is not concerned exclusively with practical activity but it is designed to emphasise skills of <i>application of practical skills and related knowledge and understanding to a situation which involves task management.</i></p> <p>Candidates are provided with a brief and are expected to demonstrate attainment related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● interpreting the brief ● gathering information to clarify the brief ● deciding on a product, or activity/event or performance to develop ● selecting and managing materials/resources ● producing the product or organising the activity/event or delivering the performance ● evaluating the product or activity/event or performance (through feedback) <p>Evidence of candidate performance that will be centrally marked, by SQA, must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a plan of action ● evidence of a product or an organised activity/event or a performance ● evidence showing evaluation/review of the practical assignment 	<p>Designed to emphasise skills of <i>interpreting and gathering information, analysing, decision making and action planning</i></p> <p>Candidates are expected to produce evidence of attainment related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● interpreting the scenario ● identifying and researching cases in a contemporary environment ● consulting individuals, organisations and agencies ● developing the outline scenario from at least two points of view ● analysing the case study situations ● recommending action ● evaluating the analysis and recommendations (through feedback) <p>Evidence of candidate performance that will be centrally marked, by SQA, must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a plan of action ● a research-based report and a case study report ● evidence showing evaluation/review of the extended case study

Colleges' role in external assessment

General management

The conduct of national external assessments needs a high degree of organisation and preparation. Because the amount of external assessment will increase as SGAs are implemented, the scale of the college's role in managing external assessment will also increase.

For more information see *Conditions and Arrangements for National Qualifications* for the current year.

For all types of external assessment, colleges need to:

- ◆ prepare candidates for assessment
- ◆ make arrangements for candidates with special assessment requirements
- ◆ provide suitable accommodation, equipment and services
- ◆ manage oral assessments, or observations of performance or skill demonstration
- ◆ manage projects or Course work, including authenticating portfolios and other evidence from project-based assessment
- ◆ submit estimates (or, if this does not happen, make sure that candidates know in advance of taking the SGA that they will not be able to appeal against external assessment decisions)

Submitting estimates

SQA asks centres to use evidence from internally-assessed work to estimate candidates' likely achievements in the external assessment. This allows us to make external judgements in the light of centres' judgements about the candidate. Where a centre is accurate in estimating its candidates' achievements, candidates from that centre who do not do as well as expected in the external assessment can, potentially, be awarded the qualification at the estimated grade. We use this system to enhance the reliability of final assessment decisions. The system also allows us to award qualifications to candidates who, for some acceptable reason, are absent on the day of the external assessment.

Estimates should be based on the 9-point band scale (1-9) and should be submitted by 21 April of the examination year concerned. The band scale relates to the National Qualification grades. Each grade, A, B, C is divided into an upper and lower band (eg band 1 is upper grade A, band 2 is lower band A). Band 7 signifies a near miss, while 8 and 9 represent no award.

For Courses which are externally assessed by examination, centres may use **prelims** to arrive at their estimates for candidates. One approach is to use two or

three NAB assessments. This combines the two purposes of summative Unit assessment and assessment for estimates and appeals. In practice, for example, it would be possible to have a January prelim based on two Unit assessments, or a March prelim, based on three Unit assessments.

Specimen question papers which exemplify standards for the external assessment are freely available to candidates on the Internet and so cannot be used in totality for prelim purposes.

Preparing candidates for assessment

All candidates must be given full information about the nature of the assessment they are about to take, including an explanation of the regulations associated with the assessment instrument to be used. They have to be told whether they can access dictionaries and calculators during examinations or project write-ups. For project-based assessments, they have to be told which aspects of project evidence have to be written up in supervised time and controlled conditions, as well as being told the arrangements for doing this.

Making arrangements for candidates with special assessment requirements

Special assessment arrangements can be applied to all SQA qualifications. They are intended to enable all candidates to demonstrate their level of attainment in relation to the qualification standards.

For more detail, see the section on special assessment arrangements in the *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education*.

Candidates with a physical disability, a sensory impairment, a specific learning difficulty, or a temporary disability at the time of the assessment, may be eligible for special assessment arrangements. This can involve finding readers or scribes, or setting up separate rooms with word processing facilities. The Head of Centre must agree all requests for special arrangements before they are sent to SQA.

Providing suitable accommodation, equipment and services

For examinations, centres must:

- ◆ organise enough accommodation, and prepare the rooms to ensure that the conditions for assessment are maintained
- ◆ ensure secure storage of examination stationery
- ◆ nominate suitable SQA invigilators

- ◆ liaise with invigilators before and during the examination programme to ensure the smooth operation of the process

Managing oral assessments or observations of performance or skill demonstration

College responsibilities relate mostly to arranging for the accommodation and resources needed for the assessment to take place and co-operating with the assessors in advance, during and after the assessment activities.

Managing projects or Course work, including authentication of portfolios and other evidence from project-based assessment

Project management involves centres in:

- ◆ providing induction to the SGA external assessment and on-going guidance and support to candidates while the project or Courses is developing
- ◆ ensuring that candidates are supported in developing the general skills needed for project work
- ◆ ensuring that individual candidates are equipped with the skills and knowledge they may need for their own projects

Most project-based assessment evidence that is subject to external assessment is sent to SQA — we then arrange for marking. Colleges must organise the production of candidates' evidence and submit it to us within the required time.

Centres also have an important role to play in authenticating items of evidence. In project assessment this means that the centre has to arrange and supervise the writing up of components of candidates' evidence. (Specially appointed invigilators are not required but write-ups must take place in supervised time and in controlled conditions.)

Re-submitting project work

The centre will be providing on-going guidance and support to candidates taking project-based assessment. This means that the evidence candidates eventually submit for external assessment should be familiar to you and closely aligned to your estimate of their likely attainment in external assessment.

Where a candidate is unsuccessful in the external assessment, or achieves a grade lower than the one estimated, you should be in a position to advise them on why this has occurred and what needs to be done to improve the project evidence for re-submission.

External moderation

The quality assurance process which was previously called ‘verification’ is now called ‘moderation’ (except when relating to SVQs).

Our external moderation principles and procedures are described in detail in *Putting Assessment Moderation Policy into Operation*. See also *Questions and Answers*.

The moderation process builds on the one which operated for National Certificate qualifications. SQA will monitor the quality of internal assessment through external moderation — NABs materials for each Unit, where these are available, will provide a guide on the evidence that is required from lecturers. We can arrange a development visit (for which there is a subsidised charge of £100) to help with this.

External moderation will operate as follows:

The process

Moderation will:

- ◆ be based on a sample of candidates identified by SQA and notified to centres about a month from the Unit completion date
- ◆ involve central moderation for evidence that is readily transportable (the evidence will be returned to centres)
- ◆ involve visits from moderators for performance evidence and evidence which is too bulky to be easily transported
- ◆ focus on the centre’s assessment of candidate attainment, concentrating on the assessment evidence that formed the basis of the decision on whether a candidate had demonstrated success in the Unit outcomes, ie on completed candidate evidence
- ◆ so far as possible, be holistic, with moderators working at outcome level rather than at the level of performance criteria
- ◆ require centres to store evidence until the award is confirmed by SQA

Timing

- ◆ Any centre offering a Unit for the first time will (so far as possible) be selected for moderation
- ◆ Moderation will go on throughout the year
- ◆ For written evidence, it will take place just after the centre has assessed its candidates
- ◆ For performance-based evidence, it will take place just before the end of the Unit

Troubleshooting

- ◆ Moderators will visit centres if substantial concerns arise from moderation
- ◆ There may need to be re-assessment of all candidates if the Unit assessments are out of line with national standards

Procedural arrangements are reviewed in Section 10.

9: Resource management

The resource implications of introducing SGAs will include front-end activities such as:

- ◆ timetabling
- ◆ bursary allocations and the length of the bursary year
- ◆ funding regimes — FEFC, LECs, European Union
- ◆ decisions on models based on attracting and retaining candidates, candidate achievement, and Unit costs
- ◆ administration, including changes to SQA data formats and procedures, and data inter-change

Important sources of information include *Implementation Studies in Colleges: Timetabling Issues*; monthly seminars for Higher Still managers, (HSDU/SFEU); and for detailed system requirements, *Conditions and Arrangements for National Qualifications*, and *Higher Still Operational Requirements for FE colleges' Computerised Information systems*.

On-going activities will include:

- ◆ communication and information technology up-dates for hardware and for software to help guidance, curriculum planning and candidate tracking
- ◆ induction and on-going guidance
- ◆ external assessment management (likely to vary across subjects), including estimates, appeals, conduct of examinations and project-based external assessments
- ◆ administration, such as candidate records on achievement, guidance, and Core Skills tracking
- ◆ updating of resources for learning and teaching, including those supporting flexible delivery and guidance

10: Operating SGAs

This section highlights the operational procedures which relate to SGAs: approval, authorisation, validation, entering candidates, results, and certificates.

Approval

In general, centres do not have to seek approval to offer named or general SGAs, but they must have approval to offer the component Courses and Units they intend to offer, and they must tell SQA about the SGAs being offered.

For more information see *Guide to Approval*.

Checking that all Courses and Units in the SGAs are formally approved

If your college has devolved authority for approval you should tell us (on the form 'Devolved Centre Notification of Approval Only') of all the SGAs that you have approved so that our approval and audit records are kept up-to-date.

There is detailed information in *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education*.

You should check all the Courses and Units in the SGAs you intend to offer. Courses and Units in the National Qualifications catalogue that directly match former qualifications are pre-approved and will have already been added to your college's approval profile in our records. Some Courses and Units have no direct match with previous qualifications. These should be subject to your college's own formal approval processes before you notify us.

Contact SQA's Approval Section if your college does not have devolved authority for approval.

As well as approval, all colleges offering general SGAs at Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher must, for the time being, seek authorisation of these awards. The checks on approval of Courses and Units need to be completed before the authorisation process can be completed.

Authorisation

Authorisation is a new process that applies to general SGAs at Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher. It is the process of recognising that a particular programme of Units and Courses has coherence and meets the design rules for a general SGA at the intended level.

For details see *Guidance on Authorisation for General Scottish Group Awards*.

Reason for authorisation

For named SGAs the choice of subjects is limited by the specification. There is no such restriction on general SGAs other than the requirement that the programme should be coherent. The authorisation process is a check by SQA on the particular combinations of Units that candidates choose. In some cases, candidates may want to study a group of subjects that is generally broad in scope, thus keeping their options open at the next stage of their education or training. For other candidates the named SGA may not be quite specialised enough for their progression needs.

Outcome of authorisation

General SGAs allow suitable (ie coherent) programmes for individual candidates which meet the design requirements for an SGA to be certificated.

These programmes will meet the following conditions:

- ◆ the choice of Courses and Units fulfils the SGA requirements for numbers and levels of credits, external assessments and Core Skills
- ◆ the programme helps the candidate to progress to further/higher education, training or employment
- ◆ the programme is coherent, ie the whole programme and its components can be justified in terms of the candidate's intentions, interests and needs. This needs judgement, at centre level, about the programme that the candidate will follow

The process of authorisation

For the next few years, authorisation will be carried out by SQA. All centres must use the following procedure for each general SGA they intend to offer.

1. Check whether the programme is pre-authorised. (Use the examples given in *Guidance on Authorisation for General Scottish Group Awards* and any

subsequent list from SQA.) Pre-authorized groupings of subjects are based on typical broad programmes which are currently popular. The list will be extended over time, so in many cases centres will find that candidates' choices are already authorised.

2. Provide guidance to the candidates when they are selecting their subjects, ensuring that the programme **meets the design rules** for number and level of Unit and assessment credits and Core Skill requirements; that it is based solely on existing National Courses or Units; and that it **has coherence** and **allows progression** for the candidate.

3. Check whether the subjects chosen would satisfy the conditions for any named SGA. If they do, the candidate(s) should choose whether to enter for the named award or the general award. (Named awards are, by their nature, already authorised.)

4. Complete the form 'Application for Authorisation (for general Scottish Group Awards at Intermediate 2 and above)'. You may have one candidate or many candidates wishing to follow the programme, but you only need to fill in one form per programme. The form asks whether the centre is approved to offer all the proposed Courses and Units. It also asks:

- ◆ about the rationale (aims and objectives) of the programme.
- ◆ about possible progression, and how the assessment credits selected will ensure that the programme meets its aims.
- ◆ for a list of the Courses and Units which the candidate has selected. As in all SGAs, candidates can draw on already completed qualifications, for example, Standard Grades or SVQs. The form is not a check on whether or not the candidate has these qualifications — it merely allows us to see how you propose to put the group award together.
- ◆ for a list of the Core Skills Units that are included in the proposed specification so that we can check whether the Core Skill profile is covered by Courses and Units in the SGA or already covered through credit transfer from other awards, eg Standard Grade.

5. Send the form to SQA. After we have checked that the proposed award can be authorised, you will be given a code that should be used to enter candidates. Where the centre needs to take more action, SQA will give prompt notification.

Future plans for authorisation

We expect some programmes leading to a general SGA to become established routes to further study or employment, and that these will occur frequently. In time, these programmes may be validated as named SGAs and entered in the *National Qualifications Catalogue*. Also in due Course, as centres and SQA gain

experience of running general SGAs, it may be possible to devolve the authorisation process to centres.

Validation

Responsibility for the development and validation of National Courses and National Units lies solely with SQA. Responsibility for developing named Scottish Group Awards based on validated Units and Courses may be devolved to centres whose systems meet the criteria for the Quality Assurance Element 'Validation of SQA Qualifications' from 1 August 2000.

For more details see *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education and Validation of named Scottish Group Awards: guidance for centres.*

In the meantime, see the publications named in the box above right if you wish to put forward new proposals, for example for new named SGAs, changes to the mandatory section of an SGA by replacing Units or Courses with alternatives, or adding a new options list for an SGA.

Registration, entries, results

As for all SQA qualifications, colleges should check that SGA candidates are registered with SQA and have a Scottish Candidate Number (SCN). New candidates should be given a number from the college's allocations of SCNs. It is especially important that SGA candidates are registered only once, so that their details can be checked where credits are claimed. No charge is made for registration.

For more details see *Registrations, Entries and Results: a procedural guide for centres* and *Registrations, Entries and Results: a video guide for centres.*

Entering candidates

Costs

There are no extra costs involved in entering candidates for SGAs beyond the total cost of the component Units and Courses. The current charge for a National Course is £21.00. This includes £12.30 for the Unit components and £8.70 for the external assessment. The charge for a National Unit is £4.10. These charges will increase from August 2000.

Entry procedures

Candidates have to be entered for SGAs if they are to be awarded the qualification — an award cannot be automatically generated by our computer, even if the individual concerned has gained all the necessary components.

Candidate entries can be done candidate-by-candidate or by group of candidates. The information we need is:

- ◆ Scottish Candidate Number and date of birth for each candidate
- ◆ title and class code for the SGA
- ◆ expected completion date for each candidate (month and year)

More about completion dates

- ◆ For **Course Units** and **free-standing Units**, this is the date when you expect that candidates will have completed their work, that internal assessment will be completed and that candidate evidence will be available for moderation
- ◆ For **Courses/external assessments**, this is the date the examination diet relates to (this is 052000 for all external assessments for the summer diet of examinations in 2000). For Courses in named SGAs which are assessed by external assessment projects there will be several dates during the year for submission of candidates' work for assessment — details will be supplied as soon as possible. There is no need to make an additional entry for the external assessment of candidates who are entered for Courses. An external assessment can be entered in its own right — this may be because a candidate is re-sitting the assessment (having previously passed in the Units concerned) to gain an improved award.
- ◆ For **SGAs**, this is the date when you expect all the Courses and Units contributing to the award to be completed. It will be the date when the SQA computer will begin checking candidates' results profiles to establish whether or not they have met the requirements of the group award.

At the completion date the computer will search to see if the candidate meets the requirements of the award entered for.

Results

At the same time as candidates receive their certificates, the college will receive two copies of each of their candidate's results. This will show achievements of a Scottish Group Award and detail the band for National Courses. Awards in National Courses will be reported to centres in terms of grades. Awards in National Units are ungraded. Candidates who achieve a near miss in a National Course will be awarded a grade C in the National Course of the same title at the level below, provided they have successfully completed the Units of the Course.

Certificates

The Scottish Qualifications Certificate

SGAs will be recorded on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) as a significant achievement. Candidates will also receive a commemorative certificate.

The new certificate will be cumulative and up-dated as the candidate passes through the qualification system. The candidate's Core Skills profile will appear on all certificates from August 2000. The most recent achievements will be highlighted in bold type.

Because SGAs are not graded, the SQC will contain a section called 'Supplementary Information'. This section shows users of the certificate the **value added** by the candidate in gaining the group award. The minimum number of Course credits required to obtain the group award is shown (for example, for a Higher SGA this would be three Higher Courses at Grade C) and the candidate's achievement against the minimum criteria is shown opposite. In many instances candidates will achieve well above the minimum requirements.

Credits is the next indicator shown. The candidate's achievements are scanned by the SQA computer and the highest level of credits achieved by the candidate are counted towards the award. The minimum requirement at Higher is 20 credits — 12 credits at Higher and 8 credits at Intermediate 2 so, for example, a candidate completing five Highers will be shown as having 20 credits at Higher, highlighting achievement well above the minimum requirement.

The Core Skills profile will show the candidate's highest level of achievement to date. No distinction will be made for a Core Skill achieved through a dedicated Core Skill Unit or through automatic certification.

Candidates achieving an SGA will receive a **commemorative certificate** along with the SQC. Where a candidate achieves a named SGA, the name of the group award will appear on the commemorative certificate. General SGAs will simply appear as 'Scottish Group Award at [level]'. The word 'general' does not appear on certificates.

Candidates receiving the SQC for the first time will also receive a leaflet outlining the key aspects of their certificate. Candidates will be notified of any failure to qualify for a certificate entry.

The main time for the issue of certificates will be in August, but candidates who successfully complete their SGAs at other times of the year through project-based assessment will receive their certificates outwith the summer.

Appendix 1: Publications

SQA Publications

To order SQA publications, telephone our Sales and Despatch section on 0141-242 2168. Please quote the product code when ordering. A charge may be made for some publications.

Guidance on Special Assessment and Certification Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs and Candidates whose First Language is not English
(A0645, June 1998)

Quality Assurance Principles, Elements and Criteria
(A0798, December 1998)

Putting Assessment Moderation Policy into Operation (from August 1999)
(A0892, April 1999)

Registrations, Entries and Results: a procedural guide for centres
(A0907, May 1999)

Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education
(A0841, June 1999)

Registrations, Entries and Results: a video guide for centres
(A0944, August 1999)

General SGAs: Authorisation guidelines
(A0877, September 1999)

Conditions and Arrangements for National Qualifications
(A0828, September 1999)

Automatic Certification of Core Skills in National Qualifications
Paper Catalogue (A0906, November 1999) CD-ROM (A0953, March 2000)

Scottish Group Awards – A guide for centres
(G1029, March 2000)

National Qualifications Catalogue
(G0788, April 2000)

National Qualifications Arrangements Documents CD-ROM
(A1028, February 2000)

Validation of named Scottish Group Awards: guidance for centres
(G0878, March 2000)

SGA Specifications – available from the SQA website at:
www.sqa.org.uk/higher-still

Also available from SQA:

Arrangements for project-based National Courses in:

Art and Design	(G1072, March 2000)
Arts	(G1073, March 2000)
Business	(G1074, March 2000)
Care	(G1075, March 2000)
Communication and Media	(G1076, March 2000)
Computing and Information Technology	(G1077, March 2000)
Construction	(G1078, March 2000)
Engineering	(G1079, March 2000)
Hairdressing and Beauty Services	(G1080, March 2000)
Hospitality	(G1081, March 2000)
Land and Environment	(G1082, March 2000)
Performing Arts	(G1083, March 2000)
Science	(G1084, March 2000)
Sport and Leisure	(G1085, March 2000)
Technology	(G1086, March 2000)
Travel and Tourism	(G1087, March 2000)

Support Pack for Scottish Group Award in:

Art and Design	(G1088, May 2000)
Arts	(G1089, May 2000)
Business	(G1090, May 2000)
Care	(G1091, May 2000)
Communication and Media	(G1092, May 2000)
Computing and Information Technology	(G1093, May 2000)
Construction	(G1094, May 2000)
Engineering	(G1095, May 2000)
Hairdressing and Beauty Services	(G1096, May 2000)
Hospitality	(G1097, May 2000)
Land and Environment	(G1098, May 2000)
Performing Arts	(G1099, May 2000)
Science	(G1100, May 2000)
Sport and Leisure	(G1101, May 2000)
Technology	(G1102, May 2000)
Travel and Tourism	(G1103, May 2000)
General SGAs	(G1104, May 2000)

HSDU Publications

To order HSDU publications, telephone 01382 455053.

Catalogue of Support Material for Higher Still in FE Colleges

Core Skills: Information for Senior Managers in Colleges (HS/72, June 1998)

Core Skills: Checklists

Managing Assessment: Information for Senior Managers in Schools and Colleges (HS/73, June 1998)

Information and Resource Pack for Presenters (HS/76, September 1998)

Higher Still Operational Requirements for FE Colleges' Computerised Information Systems

Implementation Studies in Colleges

Subject Guides

Appendix 2: Summary of SGA Families and list of named SGAs

SGA families

Art and Design

There are two SGAs in the Art and Design family

- ◆ Art and Design at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Art and Design at Higher

Arts

There are six SGAs in the Arts family

- ◆ Arts at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Arts at Higher
- ◆ Arts: Classics at Higher
- ◆ Arts: Creative Arts at Higher
- ◆ Arts: Modern Languages at Higher
- ◆ Arts: Social Sciences at Higher

Business

There are three SGAs in the Business family

- ◆ Business at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Business at Higher
- ◆ Business: Retail and Distribution at Higher

Care

There are currently three SGAs in the Care family

- ◆ Care at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Care: Health Care at Higher
- ◆ Care: Social Care at Higher

A further SGA — Care: Early Years Care and Education at Higher is under development. A detailed specification will be issued in due Course and the group award will be available from summer 2001.

Communication and Media

There are currently two SGAs in the Communication and Media family

- ◆ Communication and Media at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Communication and Media at Higher

Computing and Information Technology

There are two SGAs in the Computing and Information Technology family

- ◆ Computing and Information Technology at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Computing and Information Technology at Higher

Construction

There are six SGAs in the Construction family

- ◆ Construction at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Construction at Higher
- ◆ Construction: Building and Architectural Technology at Higher
- ◆ Construction: Building Services at Higher
- ◆ Construction: Civil Engineering at Higher
- ◆ Construction: Land Use at Higher

Engineering

There are 10 SGAs in the Engineering family

- ◆ Engineering at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Engineering: Automotive at Higher
- ◆ Engineering: Electrical at Higher
- ◆ Engineering: Electronics at Higher
- ◆ Engineering: Fabrication and Welding at Higher
- ◆ Engineering: Industrial Plant Support at Higher
- ◆ Engineering: Manufacture at Higher
- ◆ Engineering: Mechanical at Higher
- ◆ Engineering: Mechatronics at Higher
- ◆ Engineering: Practice at Higher

Hairdressing and Beauty Services

There are three SGAs in the Hairdressing and Beauty Services family

- ◆ Hairdressing and Beauty Services at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Hairdressing and Beauty Services: Beauty at Higher
- ◆ Hairdressing and Beauty Services: Hairdressing at Higher

Hospitality

There are five SGAs in the Hospitality family

- ◆ Hospitality at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Hospitality at Higher
- ◆ Hospitality: Food and Drinks Service at Higher
- ◆ Hospitality: Professional Cookery at Higher
- ◆ Hospitality: Reception and Accommodation Operations at Higher

Land and Environment

There are two SGAs in the Land and Environment family

- ◆ Land and Environment at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Land and Environment at Higher

Performing Arts

There are five SGAs in the Performing Arts family

- ◆ Performing Arts at Higher
- ◆ Performing Arts: Dance at Higher
- ◆ Performing Arts: Design and Production at Higher
- ◆ Performing Arts: Drama at Higher
- ◆ Performing Arts: Music at Higher

Science

There are two SGAs in the Science family

- ◆ Science at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Science at Higher

Sport and Leisure

There are two SGAs in the Sport and Leisure family

- ◆ Sport and Leisure at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Sport and Leisure at Higher

Technology

There are two SGAs in the Technology family

- ◆ Technology at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Technology at Higher

Travel and Tourism

There are three SGAs in the Travel and Tourism family

- ◆ Travel and Tourism at Intermediate 2
- ◆ Travel and Tourism at Higher
- ◆ Travel and Tourism: Retail Travel at Higher

List of Named Scottish Group Awards

Group Award Code	Title	Level
G59E 11	Art and Design	Intermediate 2
G59E 12	Art and Design	Higher
G5CD 11	Arts	Intermediate 2
G5CD 12	Arts	Higher
G5CE 12	Arts: Classics	Higher
G5CF 12	Arts: Creative Arts	Higher
G5CG 12	Arts: Modern Languages	Higher
G5CH 12	Arts: Social Sciences	Higher
G5A0 11	Business	Intermediate 2
G5A0 12	Business	Higher
G5A1 12	Business: Retail and Distribution	Higher
G5A2 11	Care	Intermediate 2
G5CJ 12	*Care: Early Years Care and Education	Higher
G5A3 12	Care: Health Care	Higher
G5A4 12	Care: Social Care	Higher
G5A5 11	Communication and Media	Intermediate 2
G5A5 12	Communication and Media	Higher
G5A6 11	Computing and Information Technology	Intermediate 2
G5A6 12	Computing and Information Technology	Higher
G5A7 11	Construction	Intermediate 2
G5A7 12	Construction	Higher
G5A8 12	Construction: Building and Architectural Technology	Higher
G5A9 12	Construction: Building Services	Higher
G5AA 12	Construction: Civil Engineering	Higher
G5AB 12	Construction: Land Use	Higher
G5AC 11	Engineering	Intermediate 2
G5CK 12	Engineering: Automotive	Higher
G5AD 12	Engineering: Electrical	Higher
G5AE 12	Engineering: Electronics	Higher
G5BM 12	Engineering: Fabrication and Welding	Higher
G5AF 12	Engineering: Industrial Plant Support	Higher
G5AG 12	Engineering: Manufacture	Higher
G5AH 12	Engineering: Mechanical	Higher
G5AJ 12	Engineering: Mechatronics	Higher
G5AK 12	Engineering: Practice	Higher
G5BR 11	Hairdressing and Beauty Services	Intermediate 2
G5BT 12	Hairdressing and Beauty Services: Hairdressing	Higher
G5BS 12	Hairdressing and Beauty Services: Beauty	Higher
G5AL 11	Hospitality	Intermediate 2
G5AL 12	Hospitality	Higher
G5AM 12	Hospitality: Food and Drinks Service	Higher
G5AN 12	Hospitality: Professional Cookery	Higher
G5AP 12	Hospitality: Reception and Accommodation Operations	Higher
G5AR 11	Land and Environment	Intermediate 2
G5AR 12	Land and Environment	Higher
G5AS 12	Performing Arts	Higher
G5AT 12	Performing Arts: Dance	Higher

Group Award Code	Title	Level
G5AV 12	Performing Arts: Design and Production	Higher
G5AW 12	Performing Arts: Drama	Higher
G5AX 12	Performing Arts: Music	Higher
G5AY 11	Science	Intermediate 2
G5AY 12	Science	Higher
G5B0 11	Sport and Leisure	Intermediate 2
G5B0 12	Sport and Leisure	Higher
G5B1 11	Technology	Intermediate 2
G5B1 12	Technology	Higher
G5B2 11	Travel and Tourism	Intermediate 2
G5B2 12	Travel and Tourism	Higher
G5B3 12	Travel and Tourism: Retail Travel	Higher

* Available from August 2001